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The King of Thomond

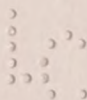


Una

The
King of Thomond

A Story of Yesterday

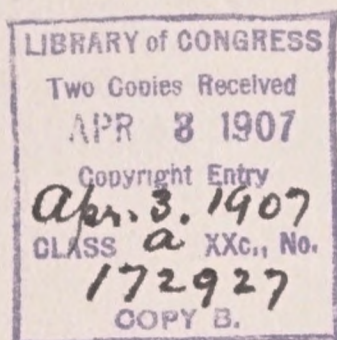
By
Martin W. Barr



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TO ONE

Who Shall Be Nameless

WHOSE NOBILITY OF CHARACTER AND HIGH IDEALS LED
ME ALWAYS TO LOOK UPWARD; WHOSE MANLINESS AND
GENTLENESS EVER INCITED MY EMULATION; WHOSE
SWEETNESS OF NATURE REMAINS, LIKE SOME SUBTLE
PERFUME, IN THE HEARTS OF THOSE WHO BEST LOVED
HIM

I DEDICATE THIS LITTLE BOOK.

“**L**OVE is the first mystery of the world. . . .
Death is the second. Between the two there
is nothing but a weariness darkened with shadows
and thick with mists. What is gold? A cinder that
glows in the darkness a moment and falls away to
a cold ash in our hand when we have taken it. But
love is a treasure which remains. What is renown?
A cry uttered in the bazar of men whose minds are
subject to change as their bodies are to death. But
the voice of love is heard in paradise, singing beside
the fountains Tasnim and Salsahil. What is power?
A net with which to draw wealth and fame from
the waters of life. To what end? We must die.
. . . Death is stronger than man or woman, but love
is stronger than death, and all else is but a vision
seen in the desert, having no reality.”

KHALED TO ZEHOWAH.

Foreword

I FEEL that I may now, without indiscretion, give this story to the public, and in so doing wrong no one, as all the actors in this strange drama of life are, to the best of my knowledge, dead these many years. If by any chance there be some who recognize the personages who move to and fro on this stage, they will keep silent and make no protest, for they are not vitally interested and are but the audience, like myself and you who read.

The story is mine, written down by one for me exclusively to use as I thought best; therefore there can be no criticism. It is just as it left her hands, except where I have supplied here and there a word or sentence that she had omitted when she was "not herself;" when the poor diseased brain could not formulate correctly or the nervous hand had refused to write. I have also thought it best to substitute fictitious names where the originals, as belonging to prominent families, have been too well known.

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Let me observe just here that I am in no way responsible for Mrs. O'Brien's sentiments nor does she voice mine. My attitude toward the marriage of defectives and insane, or indeed of any neurotic, has been long since taken and defended, and the almost inevitable penalties and results of such connection have been elaborated in my book on "Mental Defectives." *Vide* Chapter IV.

The story came into my possession in this wise: Directly after my graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, I was appointed assistant physician in the large insane hospital at Harrisonville, and soon found myself growing more and more interested in this borderland of another country, as I lingered daily in the wards, talking with its queer folk, each absorbed in a different vagary or with a fancy which I was often able to humor. Thus, old Mr. Chase would want a bit of licorice for his aching teeth; it mattered not that the teeth had all been removed thirty odd years before; half a stick would make him happy for a week; old Mrs. Carn wanted a bit of blue calico to make her doll a silk dress to wear to a party, given by Miss Moon and Mr. Sun; Mr. Harvey would like a few water-colors and a pad to paint a wonderful picture of the infernal regions from memory; Mrs. Steele, a dog's

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hair brush to clean the white cats out of her eyes, while Miss Mills, who had been created poetess laureate of the whole world, must have some paper and pencils to write an ode to a blighted life. These — rich and poor, simple and gentle — among the flotsam and jetsam that the tide of misfortune throws upon that strange beach, a large State hospital for the insane, each and all had their wants easily supplied, and sometimes the results were startling.

But there was one dainty old lady who made no requests and who attracted me greatly. Silent and reserved, she did not mingle generally with the others, but spent much time apart in her own little room, engaged in quiet occupations — sewing, reading, or gazing motionless out of the window. This during her lucid intervals; but there were other times when she seemed as if torn by the “seven devils,” and would lie for days screaming, crying, and cursing. It was pitiful to see her then, her hair unbound, throwing herself wildly to and fro, and so utterly different from her ordinary self. From these attacks she would emerge sweet, quiet, and sad. She took but little notice of me at first, except to say good morning, and once, after an unusually severe attack, she apologized in her gentle way for giving

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so much trouble. One Christmas morning I brought her some chocolate bonbons, of which I found she was very fond, and a little book — “Undine” — bound in red, limp leather, at the same time wishing her a merry Christmas. She turned from the window where she was standing, and thanked me very sweetly, and after a pause asked, as her eyes filled with tears: “Doctor Barr, can one bereft of the power to reason accurately, who is done with happiness and all else that life holds dear — almost with life itself — be merry? I am fifty years old and have never known but one merry Christmas in all that time. I live on the memory of three peaceful years but of only one merry Christmas. May yours be very many more!” She asked my age, and when I told her twenty-four, she repeated: “Twenty-four. My heart died before I was that age.” Then she began to talk of the book, telling me how she had always loved Undine. “Poor Undine,” she added, “she was faithful to the last. She loved Huldebrand more than she did herself, yet after all was forced to slay him with a kiss. But she knew life, in its truest sense, for she loved and was loved.”

This was the beginning of a more intimate acquaintance that facilitated my study of her case, and

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finding that with her intense love of beauty, the little refinements of living were to her a necessity rather than a luxury, I was enabled to contribute to her comfort in many ways without intruding upon a sensitiveness that I knew shrunk from even an appearance of complaining. An ardent lover of books, she could discuss with keen appreciation both characters and events; of the mere gossip of the hospital or on personal matters, she was silent, and never after that Christmas morning did she refer even in the remotest way to her past life.

The meager record in the case-book of the hospital reads:

"CASE: NO. 1671

"1. Una Constance Mabie O'Brien. Admitted, June 3d, 18—.

"2. Sex, age, and nativity. *Female — 50 years (?) — American (?)*.

"3. Residence for the year previous to entering hospital or so much thereof as is known. *Surrey County Almshouse*.

"4. Occupation, trade, or employment. *Teacher*.

"5. Names of parents, if living. *Unknown*.

"6. Name of husband or wife. *Unknown*.

"7. Name of children. *Unknown*.

"8. Names of brothers and sisters and the residences of each of these persons. *Unknown*.

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“9. If not more than one of these classes is known, the names and residences of such of the next degree of relation as are known. *Unknown.*

“10. Names and addresses of all medical attendants of the patient during the last two years. *Unknown.*

“But little is known of patient. Taught a small school in Harrisonville for a time, but was unsuccessful, owing to peculiarities and eccentricities, which became very marked, and she was finally taken in charge by the poor authorities of Surrey County. After a sojourn of a few months in the almshouse, exhibited decided symptoms of insanity. Refused to eat, became very melancholy and finally maniacal. Became at times violent and dangerous. Removed by directors of the poor to this hospital. Nothing is known of previous history.”

She was so different from the rest; so unpretentious, yet so refined. There was about her the air of the high-born lady which was not dependent upon costume. The simple dress of blue cotton, furnished by the hospital, was fashioned by her own deft fingers to fit to perfection the slender, graceful figure. The open collar revealed a neck shapely as a column upon which, as upon her hands, time had gathered but few wrinkles. The hair, snow-white, parted on the left side, drooped low and waving over her forehead; a style that evidently had not varied in years, judging from the miniature left in my

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keeping. The full red lips closed in a perfect bow over teeth equally perfect. The eyes of that deep steel gray, with lids long lashed, and beautifully browed, seemed ever to look backwards, not forwards. A complexion of pure ivory revealed the veins, blue on the temples, and, at times, a faint flush of pink on the cheeks. Yet with all these remains of a beauty — indeed not yet faded — an expression of indescribable sadness, of loss, and of longing gave an impression of her being very old; so that, though but little beyond middle life — just fifty — she was, as I have named her, an old lady. She was so graceful and dignified, that one in looking at her insensibly pictured some stately mansion, and she in brocades and flashing jewels as its gracious *chatelaine*; in truth her lucid intervals were largely filled with the gentle charities of kindly deeds — in reading to the sick or in the preparation of little dishes to tempt a poor appetite; in helping the inexperienced in the cutting and fitting of garments; and to soothe throbbing heads with cool hands, she was ever ready.

Her voice, though a little thin and worn, was sweet and true, and she was fond of sitting at the piano, or with her guitar at dusk, and singing snatches of old songs: “Linger not Long,” “Go

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Forget Me, Why Should Sorrow?" "The Heather Bell," Tom Moore's "Feast of Roses," and Blumenthal's "My Queen," but her favorite — the one she sang oftenest — was Samuel Lover's "Indian Summer," with its sweet, quaint tune. Of this she never tired, nor did her listeners, so much soul did she throw into her voice.

One day, during my morning visit, she asked me for a large note-book and some paper and pencils. These I brought her, and day after day she wrote and corrected; writing first on paper and then transcribing carefully, occasionally saying, when I came, "I am doing this for you."

She always appreciated any little thing I would bring her — fruit, candy, magazines, books, etc. — and while chatting with comparative brightness of the events of the day, still maintained that impenetrable reserve regarding private matters.

During my second year in the hospital she began to fail rapidly. Her excited periods became both more violent and more frequent, and one winter night, eluding a new and careless nurse, she escaped in her night-dress and bare feet. She was found, two hours later, after diligent search, almost frozen, sitting in the snow in the grounds of the hospital, singing and crooning and talking to herself. From

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this shock she never recovered; pneumonia developed and for days and weeks she was very ill. But with the failure of her physical powers, the brain cleared and, when she recognized that the end was near, she sent for me, and said:

“ Doctor Barr, I am going very rapidly. I know it and am not sorry. Open my top bureau drawer; pull it quite out — and behind it you will find a packet. Fetch it to me.” I did so.

“ Now open it.” I did so, and discovered a beautiful miniature set in gold, and the note-book that had so long occupied her, in which was a faded photograph. “ See, all are for you. The miniature — hold it up so that I can see it — it is myself in happier days — painted for him, and worn always over his heart. I have only this photograph of him when he was twenty-one, taken after some tableaux, in a costume belonging to his great-grandfather; but I liked it best and never wanted another. In the book you will find the story of my life — and, and — ” she fumbled in her bosom and brought out a magnificent diamond ring — a stone, pure white, held in a trident; a quaint setting of Neptune, rising from the waves, which broke around him.

“ See my engagement — and my wedding-ring in one. He gave it to me and all these years I have

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hidden it, no one guessed where. I have gone cold, hungry, and shelterless, but I have never parted with it. I could always fill and cover it with wax, and then wind it with a bit of string, and no one suspected it was anything but a plaything. But now it is yours and I want you to wear it always and to keep the pictures — his and mine. You will understand all when you have read my story. I know you sometimes write and you are free to do with it as you will. And now good-by, good, kind friend — I think — I have scarcely strength to think. Come closer — give me your hand — bend down — my Brian Boru — my King of Thomond — my loved one — no, you are not he — there he is — standing by the window. See his arms open to enfold me. I am coming, Brian — my beloved,” — she smiled, her wandering eyes met mine, and all was over.

Reverently we laid her to rest in the little cemetery on the hilltop, under the pines and chestnuts, and soon her name was forgotten in the hospital, where it is best to allow the veil of forgetfulness to fall quickly after one has written in the case-book:

“Died of pneumonia, January 15th, 18—.

Buried in hospital cemetery, January 17th, 18—.”

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The evening of her burial I read the story of her life — the life that had so much cloud and so little sunshine — eagerly; read through the night to the last word, the story which runs thus:

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CHAPTER I

SOME day, should you go to Maryland, you may care to visit the Island of Thomond, where the few happy years of my life were spent. The old house has been burned, so I understand, but some traces of the garden must remain, and when you see it, think: "Here is where love was born — here is where her heart first beat with life and then turned to stone." I have left it all behind and am nearing another shore, or I could not have the courage to tell you my story.

I have kept silent in regard to my past because it was too sacred to speak of, but you have been so kind to me — such a true friend — that I want you to have everything, even the life-history of Una Constance Mabie O'Brien.

My memory (except when I am sick) is as clear as ever, and my past life stands out before my mind's

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eye as if it were but yesterday. I am only indifferently educated and am not clever in writing, and sometimes I have great difficulty in expressing myself in a lucid manner. Therefore you will see that I lay no claim to even moderate literary ability, and the minuteness of my narration may at times prove tiresome. If so, pardon me, dear friend.

Now to begin at the very beginning:

I am descended on my father's side from a good Dutch family.

My great-grandfather, one Johannes Mabie, was one of the first of the New Amsterdam settlers to locate in the beautiful Valley of the Mohawk, which was then a wilderness. He is said to have been an epileptic, and during an attack was drowned in a watercourse scarcely a foot deep, while watering his horses. He had two sons — Hendrick and Myndert.

By the law of entail the estate of some thirty-five hundred acres descended to Hendrick, the elder, who, erecting a stately mansion of stone — one of the handsomest in that region, not excepting even that of Sir William Johnston — became in time one of the most respected, as well as one of the wealthiest members of his community, and at the outbreak of the revolution was an adherent of the young Repub-

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lic. Myndert, my grandfather, joined the Tories and, crossing the border into Canada, accepted a commission as colonel of a regiment known as "Butler's Rangers," a corps celebrated for its cruelty.

At the close of the war he was retained on half-pay and, as a further reward for having slaughtered many of his countrymen, including a number of his own relatives, received from the British Government an estate of some three thousand acres near Toronto.

Here he settled, marrying Manon, the only child of Raoul Rouvier, a wealthy French merchant of Toronto. It is told of him that during the war of 1812 (I think it was about 1814) the Americans and British were cannonading at long range across the St. Lawrence—the Americans being at Fort Niagara—when Myndert observed a ball strike the ground and ricochet, without exploding. Picking it up he tossed it to a British gunner, saying: "Send it back and perhaps it may kill a d—d rebel." He had scarcely spoken before a "d—d rebel" shot struck and killed him instantly. When his brother Hendrick heard of it, he remarked with true Dutch stolidity: "Served him right; the rascal had no business to be there."

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His wife, my grandmother, died soon after, leaving an only son — Valère Mabie — my father. He was sent to boarding-school and later to a Canadian college, and at twenty-one came into the full possession of a not inconsiderable property, for the management of which he had been in no way prepared. Ever a wild, headstrong lad, with no home ties to bind him to Canada, he recklessly sold out his interests there at a loss and went to New York City; from there he drifted to Europe, where he dropped out of sight for some four or five years. At the end of that time, he wrote to his uncle Hendrick to borrow money, frankly acknowledging that he had squandered his patrimony in riotous living. His uncle sent him a check for \$100 and told him to shift for himself. He disappeared for another five years, when he again wrote to his uncle that he was married and penniless, and that his wife was about to become a mother. A curt letter of refusal, telling him to trouble him no further, was the only response he received.

It seems that my father had adopted the stage as a profession and had married an actress. Of my mother's family I know absolutely nothing. But, from her diary and from some letters of my father's, I glean that she was of English birth, her name

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Constance Keith. I have some play-books that they had evidently studied together: "The Inconstant," by Farquhar, in which my father was Mirabel and my mother Oriana; "The Road to Ruin," by Thomas Holcroft — my mother the Widow Warren and father Harry Dornton; Edward Young's tragedy of "The Revenge," in which my father played the part of Zanga and my mother, Leonora. In a copy of the "Faërie Queene" which I also have, the name of Una and passages relating to her are repeatedly marked, and in her diary my mother now and again dwells upon that type of a noble woman — pure and constant. She refers also to the impression that the character of Constance makes upon her. By a singular coincidence she took the part of Constance in three plays consecutively: "The Love Chase" and "The Provost of Bruges," — both by Knowles, — my father playing Wildrake in the former and Bouchard in the latter, and in "King John," he taking the title rôle.

My mother's diary is pitiful reading. My father had loved her passionately at first, but tired of her as her beauty began to fade. "How could it be otherwise," she pathetically writes, "he is so handsome and so admired and flattered by every one; and the life is hard, so hard. Still if only he would

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now and then give me a kind word; but I believe he hates me, and I cannot leave him. And now that my child is coming, I wish we might die together — unless — perhaps — she — my little Una Constance — might win him to love me again.” Poor young thing! She had a premonition — shall I call it a premonition, or rather a realization? — that in her condition it was impossible for her to survive her trial. The excitement, weariness, and unceasing toil of a life which brought her neither the food, clothing, nor medical attention that her condition demanded pressed heavily upon her, and to these were superadded neglect and often cruelty. What wonder then that she wrote: “Now that my child is coming I wish that we might both die together.” At last, one January night, through much travail and pain, I came. It had been a trying season and the troupe was giving a performance in a miserable little draughty hall in Norristown. It was on this occasion, notwithstanding her condition, that my mother appeared as Constance in King John; immediately after the close of the play she was taken ill, and toward morning I was born. She lived but a few moments after I opened my eyes; just long enough to kiss me, to whisper the name she had chosen for me: “My little Una Constance — my

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poor little baby. God bless you!" and she was gone.

They buried her in the cemetery there. She rested sweetly on the bosom of mother earth, and I, alas! could never know the cradle of a mother's arms. My father, who had no idea of being burdened with a baby, left me with his landlady. Mrs. Mullin was a busy woman, with a hotel to look after. In fact she was both host and hostess of THE YELLOW ROSE, her husband being a lazy, shiftless ne'er-do-well. But she did her best for me in her homely fashion, and if not tender, was always kind. My earliest recollection, when I was almost three years old, is of a dog named Fay, and of playing in the stable yard, back of the hotel, where the farmers quartered their stock on market days.

I was always fond of climbing up into the wagons and I got to know most of the men very well. They were always kind to me, and many were the red apples, russet pears, popcorn, bunches of grapes, and flowers that they brought me. Many the rides that I took on their horses, and now and again a kind-hearted man would take me home with him overnight. At such times I was petted and feasted, and the farmer's families would look at me with com-

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passion in their eyes. Many of them would shake their heads and say, "Poor little thing," and fondle me. I did not know exactly what a poor little thing was, but it seemed to me that by being a poor little thing I was in some way superior to other children, and therefore I felt it was nice and something to be proud of.

So, until I was five years old, I ran wild, often barefoot in summer, among the roughest people; but I never heard an obscene word, although their language and expressions were not always the most refined. Mrs. Mullin, always good, never restrained me. Although I gathered from scraps of conversation that my father was very irregular in his payments, it made no difference to this kind friend who, having no children of her own, had taken me to her heart and was most indulgent. In truth, the first grief I ever experienced was the loss of this foster-mother, in my sixth year. I can remember being taken into her room to bid her good-by. Her face was flushed, there were dark rings under her eyes, and she was breathing heavily. When I came to her bed she motioned to me to come closer, and as I kissed her, she said: "God bless you, Una Constance. Be a good girl always."

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Then a tall, thin woman, whom I heard them call the nurse, led me away and put me to bed.

The next day the hotel was closed. Every one walked softly and I heard them say, "She is dead;" and when I came near, they would say, "I wonder what's to become of her," and intuitively I knew they were talking of me. The day of the funeral I remember well, for, dressed in a blue print frock with a broad black sash, a black ribbon around my left arm and black streamers around my hat, I was taken into the parlor to see, for the last time, my good old friend in her coffin, dressed in white and covered with flowers. The Methodist minister was there in his long black coat and preached a long sermon. Then we went to the cemetery in a carriage and I held tight hold of Mr. Mullin's hand. When we came back, a tall, light-haired man, with cruel blue eyes, was waiting for me; he told me he was my father, and that he had come to take me away. I did not like his face, and he caught and shook me when I tried to run away. I screamed and clung sobbing to father Mullin. He was all I had in the world now; him I knew and loved, not this cold stranger. He had always been a good sort of comrade, even in his drunken spells, never harming me, always ready to share his

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pennies, or give me candy, and now we were both at one stroke in a sense orphaned; both had lost a mother. He, poor man, was powerless to help me, for homeless, friendless, and an irresponsible, he was about to drift to his death in the almshouse, while I in the grasp of this cruel man was to meet a life scarcely less cold.

Crossly bidding me to dry my eyes and stop my tantrums, my father half-led, half-carried me to the waiting stage-coach, and soon all that I was ever to know of my childhood's home was lost in the darkness as I sobbed myself to sleep.

CHAPTER II

I WAKED to find myself in a dingy lodging-home in Philadelphia. My father took me, half-dazed as I was, into a stuffy dining-room where some dozen people were gathered round a table. There was a shout of welcome, and immediately a black bottle was passed, from which he took a long, deep draught of something.

"Is this the brat?" said a large, red-faced young woman. "Come here!" I shivered and drew back. She fascinated while she repelled me. I could only stare. She wore a dress of dirty red silk, her lips were thick and red, her cheeks very red and her hair very yellow. Jewels sparkled in her ears and on her fat, stumpy fingers.

"Well, zany," she said, "what are you staring at?"

"At you," I replied, suddenly forgetting my bashfulness. "Are you the scarlet woman the minister preached about?"

There was a roar of laughter from all except my father and the woman, who both frowned, and she

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bit her lip as she observed: "Children should be seen, not heard." My father gave me a hard slap over the ears and bade me eat my supper, as one of the other women called out: "Now, Perdita, you oughtn't to get mad at the child, for she recognized you at once," and turning to me she added: "The lady is Miss Perdita Duchesne. But come, it is time for us all to be going; bring the child along." I hastily finished my supper and we all started for the theatre, my father and Miss Perdita walking together, I dragging behind, half-asleep, and too worn out with fatigue and excitement to realize where I was, when we had passed the little door, and were within the mystic region behind the scenes.

The plays that night were Gay's "Beggar's Opera," and its sequel, "Polly," my father taking the part of Captain Macheath and Miss Duchesne that of Polly Peachum, in both. In those days, an actor did a little of everything; sang in comic opera one night, danced the next, and acted in tragedy the third. I soon learned that my father and this woman were both the managers and the stars of the company.

After an indifferent season in Philadelphia, we journeyed through the country towns; sometimes

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lucky, sometimes not. My father, who drank more and more heavily, never gave me a kind word, and Miss Duchesne, who never forgave me that unfortunate remark about the scarlet woman, lost no opportunity to abuse me both by words and blows. Left to my own devices behind the scenes, I wove from them my visions, and dreamed my own dreams. Where other children play with dolls, I played — as it were — with real people. Now a country girl and now a boy, I wandered through green fields and down shadowy lanes, or was a fairy in fairyland. I read and re-read the “Faërie Queene” that my mother had loved and marked, until I almost knew it by heart; and in my dreaming I would picture myself as Una, and I determined some day to have a white ass and a lion and a lamb. Many of the actors were kind to me in their careless way, but they were far too busy to think of me very often, and although living in a crowd, I was singularly alone. I was utilized occasionally when a child was needed on the stage, but I was stupid, and much to my father’s disgust did him no credit, and won only harsh words which drove me more and more within myself.

And yet I was not altogether stupid. I can remember a number of the plays. Indeed I know

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most of them by heart: "The Maid of Mariendorpt," by Sheridan Knowles, in which my father took the part of Rupert Roselheim and Miss Duchesne the part of Meeta; "The Country Girl," altered by Garrick from Wycherly's "Country Wife," in which Miss Duchesne played the part of Peggy Thrift splendidly, and my father was no less successful as Belville; "The Fatal Marriage," by Thomas Southern — Miss Duchesne playing Isabella to my father's Biron. It was always such a delight to me to see her go mad and then kill herself!


When I think of those four years, the most critical period of child life, passed in such an atmosphere, "I pity my own heart as though I held it in my hand." It ended for me, as abruptly as it had begun.

One night, in one of our provincial tours, my father came out of a cold dressing-room complaining of feeling ill. He and Miss Duchesne hurried to the boarding-house, with me as usual lagging behind; and I never saw him again. A severe cold resulted in pneumonia, and within three days they told me he was dead.

I can recall now the perfect apathy with which I received the news; indeed my first and only

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thought was that he could never scold nor maltreat me any more. How could I grieve for one who did not love me, and who had never taught me to love him? My uncle Hendrick came, a great, big, red-faced, loud-voiced man, and hurried me off, as my father had done a few years before; indeed the scenes of my life seem to shift as rapidly and as effectively as those of a theatre.



CHAPTER III

I FOUND myself at ten years of age in a school in Wilmington, Delaware, kept by three women — Friends — by the name of Pusey. They were a peculiar trio. Their scholars were taught always to address them as “teacher,” not miss. Teacher Hannah was about forty-five, I suppose, tall, thin, and sallow, with straight, black hair and “eyes of no color — once they might have smiled, but never, never, had forgot themselves in smiling.” She had a large, coarse mouth and hairy moles on the side of her nose and lip. Her voice was cold, and when, on the one occasion of meeting, she shook hands with me, I felt as if I had touched a toad and shivered.

Teacher Sallie was short and fat, with a round, pleasant face, and would, I think, have been nice and kind and chatty, had she not stood in such awe of Teacher Hannah, that she was afraid to call her soul her own; so, having developed no personality, she was silent and undemonstrative.

Teacher Mary, the youngest — perhaps approach-

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ing forty — with snapping black eyes and red cheeks, would have been pretty, but she, like Teacher Hannah, was disfigured by several moles on the face. She was pettish and peevish and rather kittenish at times, but was, in the eyes of her two sisters, the one perfect thing in the world.

They lived in an ordinary three-story brick house with a narrow yard running back to where stood a starved, stunted peach-tree. A narrow brick walk separated two narrow grass plats, where a few spindling plants had struggled into blossom against the walls on either side.

Into this unlovely, loveless abode, I was introduced one chill November day by my gruff uncle, who had scarcely spoken a word to me during our journey from Philadelphia. Teacher Sallie opened the door and ushered us into a parlor cold, prim, and dim. Teacher Hannah came in and my uncle immediately turned me over to her, paid her some money, and hurried away without even a good-by to me.

Bidding me take off my wraps, Teacher Hannah, with a curt, "Come with me," waved me up the narrow stairway, cautioning me not to touch the walls or the banisters. The room over the back parlor was the schoolroom, with ten plain

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wooden desks, and a big armchair in the corner, from which Teacher Hannah could command the whole room at a glance. At the desks were three little boys and six girls, sitting face to the wall, with hands behind backs and heads bent over their books. They neither turned nor looked up as we entered, and Teacher Hannah, motioning to me to sit down, began to examine me. I had learned to read, had picked up some little knowledge of figures, and having an excellent memory, could give the names and location of many of the towns we had visited; but beyond this I was absolutely ignorant, as far as school requirements go.

After a little, Teacher Mary came in and took me into the front room, where sat a girl of about sixteen, who was not a regular scholar, but took only a few studies such as her health permitted, as she was an invalid, subject to epileptic attacks. Her father, a naval officer, had sent her here chiefly to be taken care of — and that she certainly was; for whatever else may be lacking in a Friend's school, its pupils are under watchful guardianship.

Teacher Mary here began to initiate me into the mysteries of grammar, geography, and history, until recess, when we were marshalled down the stairs, into the back yard, and decorously paraded up and

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down the narrow pathway, while Teacher Mary stood at the window, to see that we walked properly.

When this exercise was finished and we had gathered on the back porch for a few moments, a pretty little girl about my own age came up to me, and asked my name, where I was from, and what my father did. When I told her she looked first amazed and then exclaimed in a loud voice: "Her father is a play-actor. How horrible! Why, they say all play-actors drink; does your father drink?" When I, in my innocence, acknowledged that he did, she screamed again and told all the other children, who looked shocked. Then they were amused at my name. They thought it "*so odd*" and "*so funny*." And the girl said: "Our fathers are gentlemen; and yours is not. We don't want you to come near us. Go away." The girl had beautiful yellow hair, a fine white skin, and bright black eyes which pierced one. Her dress was a lovely pink organdie and mine was an old faded green print. She seemed to me a beautiful princess, and beauty always fascinated me; so in reply I kissed her. She pushed me away and slapped me in the face.

"Beast!" she cried. "You daughter of a play-

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actor! Your father is a drunkard, and will go to hell."

"Oh, hush!" I replied. "My father is dead."

"Then he is in hell now," and she struck me again.

I became dizzy. Everything swam before my eyes. All the latent fury in me was roused. I felt as if I could kill her, as I sprang forward, struck her full in the face, and threw her down with a strength born of the passion within me. They thought me half-civilized — a barbarian. The children made no outcry, but stood in awed amaze. The school-bell rang, but we did not heed it. Suddenly all three teachers appeared, and I felt myself drawn away and shaken violently by the arm. It was Teacher Hannah who held me in a grip, stern and uncompromising, from which there was no escape. The other teachers lifted the girl, Lucy Ash, from the ground, and began to brush her, but Teacher Hannah simply glared. Lucy told how I had attacked her unprovoked, and her story was corroborated by the others. Filled with disgust at their lies, I was too stunned even to deny the accusation, and made no defense. I really knew nothing of children, having met but few in my life, excepting in my occasional visits to the farmers. I looked

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at her, and she was so beautiful that I stepped forward again to kiss her, but the action was misinterpreted, and Teacher Hannah again drew me back, and shook me until my teeth chattered like castanets. "Oh!" I said, "I forgive her. She is so beautiful; she is like Elaine, the Lily Maid of Astolat." The teachers looked at me in amazement, and Lucy cried out: "She is a wicked, wicked girl; she struck me and I didn't do anything. Ain't that so?" and she appealed to the other children. They all nodded. Again the bony fingers of Teacher Hannah closed on me, and I was shaken like a wisp in the wind. "Now apologize," she said. "I will not," I replied. "She is not Elaine; she is Fidessa, who pretends to be true faith, when she is only Duessa, false faith, the daughter of Falsehood and Shame."

Here Teacher Sallie interposed with: "Bless me, what has the child been reading?" "The 'Faërie Queene,'" I replied. "Stuff," said Teacher Hannah. "Come with me." And she led me into the house and promptly locked me in a closet under the stairs to meditate, she said. Here, without food or drink, I stayed until evening, when I was taken out, lectured on my wickedness, and put to bed, with a glass of milk and a piece of dry bread for

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my supper. To me, however, that made but little difference, since in my stage days I had too often gone hungry, and the good bread and sweet, rich milk proved as great a luxury as was the bath and the little low white cot — the best and cleanest bed I had ever known.

I slept soundly after these strange and new experiences, and awoke early — before the other children. I can well recall the atmosphere of protection and peace that pervaded that little dormitory; something to me so unreal, that I wondered if it was not one of my dreams, until it was broken by a call from the open doorway. “Children, get up,” said Teacher Sallie, and with an admonitory shake and some assistance to the sluggish ones, the washing and dressing were soon accomplished; and at half-past six we were conducted, in the same orderly fashion of the day before, down-stairs to the breakfast-table, where a simple, but substantial, meal was served with the same exquisite neatness that had characterized the bedroom, Teacher Hannah taking care that nothing should suffer from contact with our hands.

The breakfast over, we divided into groups to assist in the rearrangement of bedrooms, dining-room, and kitchen. At eight o’clock our line, aug-

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mented by the addition of the day-scholars, waited outside the schoolroom door for Teacher Hannah's summons. Then I heard: "Enter Una Constance. Good morning, Una Constance. Take thy seat, Una Constance." I followed the example of the others, whom I found with bowed heads and hands clasped behind backs, seated at their desks. The same precision attended every action. Thus when my assailant of the previous day received the command: "Open thy desk, Lucy Ash, and take out thy spelling-book," she did that and nothing more, simply returning to her former position and awaiting the next command, given after this one had been repeated to all the pupils, and each book had been placed before its owner. Then followed: "Open thy spelling-book, Lucy Ash, at page six, and prepare the first column." Each child had a different lesson, and turning the chairs to face the teacher, recited it entirely alone so that there should be no prompting, and, as was supposed, the mind be concentrated without the distraction of listening to another's recitation. Not only was this not achieved, but neither did the child receive the stimulus of emulation and competition.

Still greater concentration was attempted by requiring us to discover our own failures. Thus, one

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day, after I had recited half a page of my history lesson, Teacher Hannah oracularly announced: "Thee has omitted a word, Una Constance. What was the word?" Upon my failure to find it, I was remanded to my position of face about, to study a lesson which had been entirely faultless in other respects.

Teacher Hannah, when not dominating us, was munching candy, and this was a fruitful source of distraction, while insipient envy and insatiable longing filled our hearts. At eleven o'clock each in turn was called to leave the room silently, and tip downstairs to the back door, where Teacher Mary was stationed to give a glass full of water — no more, and no less — as we were not allowed to waste, and the glass must be ready for the next one. Oh! the dreariness of those hours from eight o'clock until two!

Dinner, like breakfast, was simple and substantial — dry bread, soup, and pudding, or meat with a vegetable and fruit. After an afternoon study period from 2.30 to 4, the day-scholars went home, and we, for exercise, walked slowly around the square, ten paces apart, while Teacher Mary kept guard over us from the door-step. After a frugal supper of bread and butter, stewed fruit, and cam-

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bric tea, we gathered again around the table with our sewing and knitting, while Teacher Hannah read to us some moral book, such as "The Life of Elizabeth Fry," the "Memoirs of Caroline Elizabeth Smelt," etc., — but never a poem or a fairy-tale. On Sundays we were taken to the Friends' Meeting, another atmosphere of silence. Never, except by chance, did we hear music or singing. Once when there was a big fireman's parade, we did so much want to see it; but the blinds were pulled down, and we were remanded to the back yard. In fact, no convent cell ever presented a life of greater asceticism.

We did for a little while, shortly after my coming, manage to get an hour of free play, but it was stolen. We were always put to bed in the third story, by Teacher Mary or Teacher Sallie; the boys in the front, the girls in the back room. After the teacher had gone — leaving us, as she supposed, asleep — we would all slip up very quietly, and, opening the door between the rooms, would frisk about as ghosts or fairies, white birds or rabbits, for once as free as those denizens of the wood, and in quite as innocent a fashion. That one exhibition of power to hold my own, although never repeated, had given my companions a wholesome respect for

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me, even though I was a "play-actor's" daughter; and this respect was further increased by my ability to entertain them on these occasions with dramatic presentations of characters I had seen on the stage.

One night, wrapped in a sheet and standing on the bureau with a lighted candle in my hand, — a candle that I had taken from the mantel, and lighted at the gas-jet on the landing, — I was giving them *Lady Macbeth*, when, in the act of descending an impromptu stairway formed of a table, a chair, and a stool, I looked up to find Teacher Hannah standing in the doorway. Alas! that was my last appearance, and marked the close of our season. The frightened audience was driven shivering back to bed, I was soundly spanked; after that the door between the rooms was always carefully locked, and the outside door as well. No more moonlit fairy dells for us!

Just here is a break in the thread of the story; some half-dozen pages altogether incoherent. — M. W. Barr.

Year followed year, in a routine, for me varied only by the change of seasons. Other children went

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home for vacation, but I — I had no home. They received presents and photographs and long letters from friends and kinsfolk; I had no one to think of me or to inquire for me. Every creature comfort was supplied, and I was trained in many practical ways; in that I got what my uncle paid for, but my heart and my soul were starved.

My one recreation was a walk on the banks of the Brandywine with one of the teachers. I loved to go in the afternoons, so that I could catch glimpses of home life: in winter, the happy groups in the warm light; in summer, the porches filled with beautifully dressed people. One evening, as Teacher Mary and I were returning from one of these silent walks — we always walked in silence — I saw a child come running out of a door and down the path to a gate to greet a lady and gentleman. She threw her arms around their necks and kissed them each in turn. The lady looked at me and smiled, and I felt so lonely and so sad. When I asked Teacher if it was the father and mother, she replied: "How should I know? Hurry along, or we shall be late for supper."

That night I cried myself to sleep, for my mother's first and only kiss I did not remember, and my father had never kissed me. Poor homeless,

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friendless, lonely, unloved little girl! I pitied her
then, and I pity her now!

“Ah, babe i’ the wood, without a brother-babe!
My own self-pity, like the redbreast bird,
Flies back to cover all that past with leaves.”

CHAPTER IV

*A*S time went on, my memory, which had really received a fair training in the stage atmosphere in which I had lived, so facilitated the preparation of my lessons, that I was permitted to run through all my verbatim recitations in the early morning period, and after submitting my arithmetic examples to Teacher Hannah's inspection, I was sent into the front room to join the invalid, Clara Gray, in reading and hand work with Teacher Mary, until dinner. This to me was a double benefit; not only did the change from the purely abstract mental work to practical manual occupations prove restful, but the interest in something tangible roused me from my dreaminess; and, being an apt scholar, I soon had the prospect of being in time an expert needlewoman.

My companion, on the contrary, made little or no progress beyond some knitting and the dressing of dolls. She was not very indolent, but seemed to have a positive repugnance to work of any kind;

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due probably to her condition, poor girl! for her spasms, as they increased in force and frequency, left her dull and stupid. She had a morbid fondness for listening to the reading or the recital of stories which amused her, and her father, who indulged every reasonable wish, kept her supplied with books and magazines. Just before he was ordered away on a prolonged cruise, he fell heir to some property in our immediate neighborhood — a house, which, in the prolonged absences of its former owner, had been kept open by its caretakers — an old couple — ready for any sudden arrival. Captain Gray ordered that there should be no change in this arrangement until his return, and particularly desired that the books in the library — mostly standard works — should be at his daughter's disposal. She was to go there and read, or have the books brought to her as she desired. This was truly an event in my colorless life, in which I profited by the good fortune of another, for, as Teacher Mary's duties multiplied, the office of reader had devolved entirely upon me, and here was a veritable open sesame to the cave of riches. I shall never forget the first morning we went there, and, while Clara watched me apathetically from the sofa, I literally browsed.

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“Books, books, books! . . .

Like some small nimble mouse between the ribs
Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there
At this or that box, pulling through the gap,
In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,
The first book first.”

Hume, Macaulay, Carlyle, Motley, Prescott, and Irving, each in turn transported me to a different age or clime. With Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer, Hawthorne, and Cooper, I met people in an acquaintance much closer than any personal contact had ever brought me. Grace Aguilar and Charlotte Yonge drew for me heart-satisfying pictures of the home of which I had only dreamed. The poets lifted me into a psychic world of harmony and color, in which I lingered longest with the Brownings, and beautiful editions of Shakespeare and the “Faërie Queene” gave suggestions of a pleasure new and totally unfamiliar to me — that of a meeting with old friends. Some studies in sacred and legendary art proved a key to a portfolio of beautiful prints. In these Clara took a peculiar pleasure, and when we were in the library together she never tired of turning them over and asking questions about them; so that in this way I became very familiar with them. Del Sarto’s beautiful head of

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St. John impressed me most, and it was then that the "Lives of the Saints," the meditations of Thomas à Kempis and of St. Francis of Assisi gave me my first conception of the relation of religion and life, and led me to a daily reading of the Scriptures. Thus did the legacy dropped into the lap of one unfortunate enrich the life of another, and, in this way, strangely and half-unconsciously, did I enter into another's heritage.

Returning one evening from the library with Teacher Mary, in passing the grounds of a beautiful house I saw, standing under a tree, a girl and a young man. He held her close in his arms, hers were about his neck, and, suddenly, their lips met. I stood entranced. It carried me back to the old days on the stage when I had seen such scenes enacted, but this was real. Intuitively I felt the difference, and stood, lost in this vision of love realized, until a voice recalled me. Teacher Mary, who had gone on, had missed me and had come back, saying, "How disgusting! I am surprised at you, Una Constance! Surprised and hurt! Hannah shall hear of this!" "Of what?" I asked, tearing myself reluctantly away. "Why, that you lingered to see such an — an — unusual scene."

Teacher Hannah expressed her surprise, and

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Teacher Sallie shook her fat cheeks, but I did not care. I knew I had seen that happiness of which I had dreamed — to love and to be loved.

George Macdonald says: "The crisis of our life comes upon us suddenly. If we expected it, prepared for it, perhaps it would not come." Mine came the very next day in the form of a letter from my uncle. He called to my mind that I had now arrived at years of discretion; that I was seventeen years old; that the reports of my teachers had been in the main good, and that the time had come for me to go out into the world and make a living for myself. He went on to say that he had answered an advertisement in a New York paper for a nursery-governess in Maryland, near Baltimore; that he had made arrangements with the gentleman to give me a trial, and that on the first day of June I was to go. He enclosed a check for fifty dollars, telling me it was the last he would ever give me, and that he preferred I should not write nor communicate with him again in any way, as he considered he had done more than could have been expected of him for the child of one who, by his stage career, and by his marriage, had doubly disgraced his family. To one who had never possessed

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a dollar before in all her life, that check seemed an inexhaustible mine of riches.

I had two weeks in which to make my preparations, and, oh, the delight of that shopping! I bought a hat, trimmed with pink roses and long velvet streamers. Teacher Mary was a little shocked, I think, at my gay colors, when I selected four dresses of white, blue, pink, and yellow each. But she helped me with the cutting and fitting, and, emancipated from school, I set busily to work, and quite astonished myself at the ease with which I accomplished them. So, on the appointed day, everything was ready. My modest trunk (that I had bought for a dollar from Teacher Mary) was packed and sent to the station, and some money and a ticket were in my little purse. We had a solemn breakfast befitting the occasion, and the children and the three teachers gathered in the narrow entry. Each gave me a perfunctory hand-shake. Said Teacher Hannah: "Farewell;" said Teacher Sallie: "Farewell;" said Teacher Mary: "Farewell." My heart grew tender and my eyes misty with a longing for some caress, some one, tender word, but even the children only said, "Good-by;" the door closed, and I, a girl of seventeen, inexperienced and utterly alone, was adrift on the ocean

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of life, with the great world before me, and not even
a memory to cheer and support me.

“ Sublimest danger, over which none weeps,
When any young wayfaring soul goes forth
Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,
The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,
To thrust his own way, he an alien, through
The world !

.

“ Would you leave
That child to wander in a battle-field,
And push his innocent smile against the guns?
Or even in a catacomb, his torch
Grown ragged in the fluttering air, and all
The dark a-mutter round him? not a child.”

CHAPTER V

I WALKED rapidly down the street to the depot, and, though a little confused, I was yet able to follow the crowd, and soon found myself on the train for Baltimore.

A lady who sat next to me, I think, must have surmised that I was unsophisticated and unused to travelling, for she drew me into conversation, and when I told her that I was going to Thomond, she said, "Why, that is an island in the Chesapeake. You will have to take a steamer, you know." "Yes," I assented, showing a card — "*The Zaidée*." "But do you know how to find the steamer? Child, what baggage have you?" "Only a small trunk," I answered, trying to be brave. But she must have seen despair in my eyes, for she quickly replied: "I know what we will do. I have to take a carriage, and it is not much out of my way. I will drive to the pier with you." Surely such good women are God's own messengers in the world! Such sympathy and kindness, and all unsought, was a revelation to me. Indeed I hardly

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know what step I should have taken, for, suddenly released from the swathing bands of my life with the three sisters, where every act had been prescribed for me, I had yet to learn to think for myself. As it was I gleaned much from my kind protectress, who chatted merrily while we showed our checks, had the trunks put on the carriage, and, driving rapidly through the city, were soon in the bewildering thoroughfare along the piers, where many steamers were waiting. Even there she did not merely drop me, but taking me on board of *The Zaidee* and putting me in charge of the captain, she left me with a cheery "good-by" and a warm pressure of the hand that thrilled me with a realization of the parting of friends, such as I had seen in those twilight walks. She had given me a pleasant memory, and to youth, even to one as stunted as mine, that inspired and suggested hope.

I was interested for some time watching from the deck the groups of negroes loading our own steamer and those near by, and then, learning that we should not leave for nearly three hours, I was brave enough to go on shore again and wander about among the shops. It was a delight to be alone and to be free to do as I pleased. I had never been allowed to look into the shop windows,

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and now I gazed my fill. I even went so far as to go into a little restaurant and order some ice-cream. My, how good it tasted! Then I bought a box of chocolate creams, and a novel, "John Halifax, Gentleman," which looked enticing. After this extravagance, when I found myself again on the steamer, my purse contained just twenty-one cents. Soon we were off, and I sat on the deck as we moved down the harbor enjoying the air, the water, the motion, the sight of the many strange craft, and, above all, the sense of freedom. When I told the captain I was going to Thomond, he said: "Indeed! to Doctor O'Brien's?" and when I replied in the affirmative, he gave me a quick, searching glance, saying, "I will let you know in time. There is no landing-place for us on the island, but the doctor generally sends out his boat, and if he does not, I will give him a call." Again that sharply inquisitive look, and he left me. A little later we were speeding across the water, leaving a long line of billowy waves behind us, when, as the captain said, "We struck a squall."

The sky clouded darkly, the rain fell heavily, and, as the breeze freshened, the bay became covered with whitecaps. The boat began to roll, but I was not at all seasick, and, after a little, the storm

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cleared as suddenly as it had begun, and the sun shone out again over the blue expanse of water. Late in the afternoon, the captain came to tell me that we were nearing Thomond. "See! there comes the doctor's boat, and — yes — there he is himself." Looking in the direction in which he was pointing, I saw a long, slender canoe, with two snowy sails, coming toward us over the water, like a white-winged bird; and soon I could distinguish the two passengers, and, on a flag floating from the tall mast, the name, *Cushla Machree*. Our steamer slowed down to allow the canoe to run alongside, and a gentleman sprang up the step and shook hands cordially, as the captain introduced me: "Doctor O'Brien, this is the young lady who is coming to your place."

"Ah, Miss Mabie! you have left the clouds behind and brought the sunshine with you. Captain, did you have much of a squall? You can see what it left us," said Doctor O'Brien, as he led me to the guards where I was to descend. Indeed his little craft was rocking from the swell, and I was eying, with some hesitation, the uncertain step I was about to take, when the doctor, without much ado, accomplished it for me, and, placing me on the cushioned seat in the stern, took

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at one and the same time both the tiller and the seat beside me as we swung off.

The captain waved us good-by as the steamer went slowly on its way, and we turned toward the setting sun. The salt breeze was delicious, and gave me a delightful sense of exhilaration as we skimmed over the white-crested waves. Now and again, one more saucy than the others would break over our prow, but Doctor O'Brien had so enveloped me in rugs, that I could suffer no harm even had it reached me, and he evidently enjoyed watching my delight.

"What a strange name!" I exclaimed, as the crimson letters on the waving flag caught the sunlight. "What is it?"

"*Cushla Machree*," he said, half-musingly. "The Irish for 'Heart's Delight.' And truly, Miss Mabie, I believe it is already proving itself so to you."

"Indeed, yes," I answered, "I never enjoyed anything so much."

"Well, we shall have a long sail, for the wind is dead ahead. You saw us coming wing and wing before the wind, but now you will see another kind of sailing; and we shall have to do considerable tacking," he said, as, with one sweep of the tiller,

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he put the boat about. It obeyed the helm like a thing of life, and, with both sails on one side, careened to the water's edge and shipped a wave that gave me a dash of glittering spray. "There's a welcome from old Neptune," laughed he, as I caught my breath in ecstasy. "You are a good sailor, Miss Mabie. Is this your first experience?"

"My very first. And, oh, how charming!"

"The first then of many, I can promise you."

The kindly tones attracted me, and as he rose for the moment to give his attention to handling the ropes, I had opportunity to curiously observe my new guardian. A man of about thirty-eight, with a compact, well-knit frame, lithe and sinewy, he stood six feet tall, and straight as the mast before him. His bearing betokened self-poise and self-restraint, to which superadded was that nameless something — call it what you will — that evidenced the three full generations required to make a gentleman. And this was further unconsciously betrayed in a beautiful blending of tone and manner into an exquisite courtesy, whether in addressing pleasant remarks to myself or in jesting with the old negro, who evidently understood and adored "Mars' Doctah."

The face, bronzed by a life in the open, its color

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heightened by the intense blackness of the hair, showed a profile clear cut; the nose straight; the black eyes lifted under brows not too heavy; the chin, clean-shaven, showed a decision and determination which was not lacking either in the red lips parted over ivory teeth, or a mouth whose chief charm lay in an expression of mingled sweetness and strength. Altogether it was a face to win confidence; for one felt instinctively it was the expression of a soul so to its own self true, it could not thence be false to any man.

I noticed in the hand on the tiller, the same combination of firmness with delicacy and refinement; the strength of a man, with the gentleness of a woman.

"Look out, Uncle Shadow, you'll be a ghost as well as a shadow," he called, as the sail, suddenly shifting, just grazed the head of the old darkey, who cleverly dodged it.

"Ain't been knocked ovah boad nary time yit, Mars', all dese yers I'se ben a-sailin'," chuckled the old man.

"Well, you might go to Davy Jones's locker before you know it; and then what would I do? I'd have to make Miss Mabie first mate of the *Cushla Machree*," laughed the doctor. "Will you

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begin now, Miss Mabie, and take your first lesson in navigation, preparatory to succeeding Uncle Shadow? All dwellers by Chesapeake waters must learn to manage a boat," he said, placing a rope in my hands.

I was much interested in testing the varying pressure of the wind on the sails — the line becoming taut or slack in my fingers according, as he explained, as he steered close to the wind or bore away in the long run we had to make before turning to reach our landing. Finally we put about.

"And now for the home stretch. Are you not glad?" he said, and his eyes, as he turned to adjust my wraps, startled me as being unlike any eyes I had ever seen. Like unfathomed pools, with such a soft glow in their depths, yet I had just seen them sparkle with merriment. Marvellous eyes they were, and although somewhat different, — the left being a trifle smaller than the right, with a slight cast, — yet this defect seemed to accentuate their beauty with a certain individualism rather than to detract from it.

There was a something, too, strangely familiar in the whole contour and expression of the face. Somewhere I had seen it before — but where? I mused with my hand trailing in the water, forgetting his

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question until his voice roused me with: "See, we are almost there. I know you must be glad."

Like Aphrodite newly risen from the waves, the island in its full beauty broke upon me. The house, built of warm, red brick, with white facings, and large Corinthian columns rising to the roof, stood high, the walls tapestried with ivy, and roses in a mass of color climbing to the floor of the wide piazza and around the base of the pillars. Lawns, green and well-kept, swept away from the front and wings of the building to the water's edge, broken here and there by blooming shrubs, Deutzia, Cape jessamine, huge bunches of snow-balls and fragrant magnolia.

Many noble trees stretched long shadows on the beautiful turf — oak, linden, locust, and mulberry; a silver-leaved poplar made sharp contrast with a grove of fir and pine, and tall Lombardy poplars stood like sentinels on guard. The long, level rays of the setting sun poured a golden glow over all, lighting up the many windows, as if in welcome, as, drawing nearer and nearer, our canoe finally grounded on the beach, and, alighting, we walked slowly over the lawn, toward — home.

How my pulses quickened at the thought. Was

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it at last to be mine — a home where there was beauty and happiness and love?

We turned as we reached the steps, spellbound by the charm of the hour; the gorgeousness of the western sky, the veil of silvery mist already drawing over the water, the soft splash of the waves on the beach, and the happy good-night chirping of the birds.

Unconsciously I murmured under my breath:

“The setting sun, and music at the close,
As the last taste of sweets is sweetest last;
Writ in remembrance more than things long past.”

I turned to meet again that mysterious glow in those strange eyes of my companion, and to recognize the face of the Del Sarto.

“The sun sets now, the music we will have later, and remembrance of this hour, I trust, always; for this is welcome home, Miss Mabie,” he said, as, taking my hand, he led me through the wide entrance.

CHAPTER VI

*A*S we entered the hall, an old negro man, bent and wrinkled, with wool snow-white, bowed low and spoke with a chuckling heartiness pleasant to the ear:

“Massa, I’s hyah — I’s hyah, sah.”

“That’s you, old man, always on hand,” returned Doctor O’Brien.

“Miss Mabie, this is Uncle Silence, my butler. He will show you to your room and will take good care of you.” The old negro again bowed low, but I could see that he eyed me curiously.

“Yes, miss, dis nigger do all he kin fuh yuh. Yas’m, Unc’ Silence will. I’ll go see if Uncle Shader fotch yo trunk up yit. ’Skuse me, missy, an’ please set, an’ I’ll be back in a lil minnit,” and he was gone.

“Miss Mabie, Uncle Silence puts me to shame by his politeness. Will you not be seated?” and Doctor O’Brien pushed a carved mahogany chair toward me. I laughed as I sat down.

“What odd names, Silence and Shadow!”

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Doctor O'Brien laughed too. "Yes," he said. "Uncle Silence was named by my grandfather for the Country Justice in Henry Fourth. You may remember that he was very dull when sober, but very gay in his cups. So it is with Uncle Silence. He has four celebrations a year — Christmas, Easter Monday, Whistling Monday (Whitsuntide), and Fourth of July.

"Uncle Shadow, the old man you saw in the boat, is also named for a character in the same play. They are twin brothers, and Shadow, you may have noticed, is very thin; so thin that, as Flagstaff says, 'A foeman might as well level his gun at the edge of a penknife.' Nevertheless, he has a voracious appetite. Indeed there is a tradition — and I think with some foundation — that he once ate what was intended for seven men — all of a small turkey, a quarter-peck of potatoes, a head of cabbage, and two large apple pies."

As I followed the old negro up the broad, winding stairway, I paused on the landing, where a tall, quaint old clock rang out the quarter chimes, to look down into the hall below. The foot of the stairway, with its glossy curving banister and carved newel post, rested just within an arched way. A soft crimson rug extended to the opposite corner,

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where was a spacious fireplace, with gleaming brasses on hearth and mantel, and above it the portrait of a lady, in which I fancied I saw a resemblance to Doctor O'Brien.

A deep bay-window, below the landing, opening on a veranda, gave to the embrasure the effect of a separate apartment — an effect heightened by the furnishing. The wall space between window and fireplace was fitted with open shelves, holding many books, and an antique lamp on a small mahogany table, and some odd Louis Quatorze and Roman chairs made altogether a cozy corner that suggested delightful evenings.

The polished floor and fretted cornice of the main hall caught, through the wide entrance and broad, deep-seated windows, the warm sunset glow. On quaint mahogany tables, bowls of Canton and Nankeen china were heaped high with many tinted roses. The glossy white of the wainscoting formed a fitting setting for the dead gold frames of full-length portraits of beautiful women and courtly men — here a Lely and there a Gainsborough — that panelled the walls, alternating with doors of deep-toned mahogany opening on either side into drawing-room, library, and dining-room. Some odd weapons and trophies of the chase — antlers, skins,

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fox heads, and brushes — also adorned the walls, and in one corner was a full suit of armor.

Upon reaching the second floor, I found myself in a small square hall, whose single window looked down into the broad piazza, and from this, with many doors on either side, narrow corridors, heavily carpeted in deep red, extended right and left through the building.

Uncle Silence turned to the right and opened a door at the extreme end of the corridor.

“Dis is yo’ room, missy. Hope’s yuh’ll like it.”

Like it! How could I fail to! Such a dainty, pretty room — large, square, and low-ceiled, the walls, wainscoting, and cornice white, and the floor covered with fragrant matting, with here and there a gay rug. Draperies of white dimity, edged with knotted fringe, decked the four deep-seated windows, the tester and valance of the great four-posted bed standing in an alcove, and even some of the same quaint chairs I had noticed in the hall. The bed itself was so high that the three steps, carpeted in crimson, were really needed to climb to where the luxurious pillows and the snowy coverlet, already turned back, invited me to rest. The furniture, all mahogany, was to me as curious as it was beautiful.

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Through a half-open door I caught a glimpse of a well-lighted closet with bath arrangements, a chest of drawers with knobs of cut glass, and a wardrobe with bracket and mirror set in the door, having candelabra of brass and glass on either side. Altogether, compared with my former dormitory, a dressing-room for a princess.

Between the front windows stood an odd combination of cabinet and bureau, one-half a long mirror, with its low dressing-table hardly two feet from the floor; the other half composed of small drawers, brass-mounted, above which were open shelves filled with books, and these again surmounted by the closed door of a cabinet with locks and clasped hinges of brass, the whole forming a pedestal for an exquisite bust of Clytie. Down across the corner, near the fire, was a low-cushioned sofa. A work-stand, spindle-legged, with drawers and top inlaid with lighter wood, matched a writing-desk whose dropped lid showed its accessories in massive silver. The polished brass of fender and andirons reflected the blaze of a light fire freshly kindled on the hearth. On the low mantel-shelf an open clock in crystal setting ticked a welcome that smiled up to me also from the flowers in odd, oblong, box-shaped vases of India china, and a beautiful copy of

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Murillo's Madonna drew my gaze upward, as I paused in an ecstasy at this my first realization of a home.

Did I like it! I, poor, alone, friendless, unused to luxury! Could it be true?

Pardon me, my dear doctor, for going into details, but these things mean so much to me. I have been robbed of everything but my memories, — but in these I am rich.

Involuntarily I gave a little cry, and turned to see Uncle Silence evidently enjoying my surprise and delight.

"Shall I send Hero to help you dress, missy?" he asked. I smiled at the idea of having a dressing-maid.

"No, thank you, I shall do very well."

He slowly loosened the ropes from my trunk, talking on in the same rambling fashion.

"Missy, dis hyah is a putty room, sho' nuff."

"Yes," I replied. "Beautiful."

"It ustah be Miss Geraldine's room onc't."

"Who was she?" I asked.

"Why, Mars' Brian's sister."

"And Mars' Brian is?"

"De doctor, don' you kno'. Didn't you nebber hyah tell o' Miss Geraldine? Why, she war

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mighty putty, only she died so young, po' sweet lam' she war. She had resumption o' de lungs or sumpin'. I nebber could git it zackly straight."

"When did she die?" I asked, interestedly.

"'Bout ten yer ago."

Drawing a rocker to the fire, I had yielded to the delightful sense of being at home and free, not realizing that I was gossiping with a negro servant. Indeed I had never before been brought into contact with a servant who seemed to be so a part of a household, and to his reminiscence of his young mistress I listened, too tired to think and too lazy to talk. Finally, not without some awkwardness, the old man said: "Missy, if I may mak bold to ax, did yuh come hyar fo' to marry marster, or what did yuh come fuh?" I sprang to my feet in amazement.

"Why, what do you mean?" I cried.

"Nuttin', missy, I only axed fuh to kno'."

"Why, your master, Doctor O'Brien, is married. I have come here to teach his daughter; I am his daughter's governess."

The old man opened his mouth as if to speak, paused for a moment, gave me a queer, questioning look, walked slowly toward the door, then turned and said:

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“Ax’ yo’ pard’n, missy. Didn’t mean no ’fense. Please ’scuse me. If ye’ wants anything, miss, please ring,” indicating the bell-rope.

He went out slowly, closing the door. I sprang to it, bolted it, and dropped half-fainting upon the rug, overwhelmed by a something — I could not tell what.

Overwrought and nervous, I, who had never known anything of nerves, was overpowered by a feeling I could not define. Then I did what a woman in trouble almost always does, I had a good cry, after which, feeling better, I lighted my candles and proceeded to unpack my trunk and to make my toilet.

I chose my white dress, which, fitting well, and simply made — low in the neck with a fall of lace over the short puffed sleeves — my long mirror assured me was not unbecoming.

I took a beautiful red rose from a vase and placed it in my hair. I had never dared to do such a thing before, but now, liking the effect, I added a cluster in the lace on my bosom and several at my belt, and I had just finished when Uncle Silence came at eight o’clock to call me.

“My, missy!” he said, “but yuh does look sweet. Yuh jes’ do dat, and no mistek.”

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A hanging-lamp, lighting upper hall and stairway, left the corridors in a shadow so weird and mysterious, that involuntarily I shuddered as I glanced ahead and hastened down the stair.

As I reached the landing, Doctor O'Brien, standing in front of the fireplace, raised his curiously brilliant eyes with a look that startled and confused me. He came forward to meet me, and as he drew my hand through his arm a red rose dropped from my bosom. He picked it up, and, first asking my permission, which I gave with a strange fluttering of my heart, fastened it in his coat as together we passed into the dining-room.

Here the same atmosphere of affluence and of good taste was observable in the rare old china, glass, and silver on mantel and sideboard, and in quaint corner cupboards, as well as in the beautiful table appointments, which seemed a fitting setting for a meal that was to me a veritable banquet.

"Only a Maryland supper," laughed my host, as Uncle Silence deftly served us with delicately fried chicken, thinly sliced ham, devilled crabs, biscuit, and johnny-cake; luscious strawberries, followed with rich cream and cake; and the coffee — which, at school, I had never been permitted to touch —

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was delicious. The table itself was drawn into the recess of a deep bay-window, the polished mahogany, reflecting the light of candles in candelabra, but, to my surprise, covers were laid only for two.

I looked in vain for my hostess, and Doctor O'Brien hastened to explain.

"I must ask you to excuse my wife, Miss Mabie. She is not at all well or she would be here to welcome you. Indeed she rarely comes to table — and my daughter is with her."

"What is your little girl's name?" I asked.

"Geraldine, after her aunt, my sister. She is six years old, and I am afraid very backward for her age. Indeed she is somewhat afflicted. She is incapable of speaking or moving — infirmities she inherits from her mother. I have thought that if I introduced some sort of clockwork into her body it might assist her somewhat. There is, I believe, a future also in electricity, although now its possibilities are uncertain and but hinted at. I am experimenting, and hope eventually to invent a machine that will answer every purpose."

He ceased speaking with a peculiar, penetrating glance, that chilled my soul with a nameless horror. What did he mean? I was ignorant and unsophis-

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ticated, but the introduction of clockwork or an electrical machine into the body of a six-year-old child amazed me. I gazed at Doctor O'Brien in silence, as he continued with a laugh:

"I see by your face that you do not understand me. You will, however, after a while, and I predict we shall soon become fast friends." Then he entered into a discussion of the studies he wished his daughter to take up. I am sure I must have answered incoherently, because I was thinking only of the machines, as the meal dragged on. He told me that he had agreed to pay me two hundred dollars a year for my services. I did not tell him that my uncle had not mentioned this fact to me, or that such a sum was wealth, for still the thought of the machines possessed me. Had I gotten into the clutches of a madman — of a lunatic? I had heard of such, though I had never seen one except on the stage. One of the girls at school had told of one she had seen loaded with chains. Could it be that this handsome, pleasant gentleman was really crazy? But no, it was not possible, for he began to talk of books and pictures, and I found he had travelled far and seen much, and my fears were allayed, until, after a time, he rose from the table, saying: "Now, Miss Mabie, if you will excuse me for a moment,

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I will see if my wife is ready to receive you." He was gone and I was alone. The handsome clock ticked out full ten minutes, which seemed so many hours. I had had a long, exciting day after my quiet life, and I was only seventeen, you know. At last, nervous and troubled, my thoughts again recurring to the machines, I ventured out into the hall, and met him returning.

He must have noticed my disquietude, for, taking me back into the dining-room, he filled a small glass with red wine and bade me drink it. At once feeling better, I followed, with some trepidation, as he silently led the way to the drawing-room, which proved as attractive as the other rooms.

The walls and ceiling were in two tones of red, and the chairs, sofas, and divans, all antiques, were upholstered in the same color, which was repeated in the rugs.

On the wide mantel-shelf were handsome china ornaments, and on a pedestal near the door was a statue of the Divine Athena. The half-dozen candles in silver sconces on the chimneypiece did not banish the shadows, but gave to the further end of the apartment rather an effect of *chiaro oscuro*.

At the extreme end of the room, near a grand

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piano, sat a lady, and a little girl in a white dress was curled up on a rug beside her.

“Miss Mabie — my wife and little daughter,” said Doctor O’Brien.

I bowed, and waited for Mrs. O’Brien to speak, but no sound issued from her lips. I advanced, but she did not move, and as I noticed that both were staring with a blank gaze, as if they did not see me, I grew confused, and my heart beat loudly. Doctor O’Brien, observing my embarrassment, drew a chair forward, and as I sank into it I glanced up and met the same closely observant expression I had noticed before.

The silence, which seemed to last for hours, was finally broken with: “Do you play, Miss Mabie?” “No,” I replied. “Then I will play for you. My wife likes music in the evenings; so does my little Geraldine. You must be very gentle and patient with her, Miss Mabie. Come to papa, darling,” he said, and held out his arms; but the child did not move, and he leaned forward and picked her up and walked down the room with her, leaving me seated near Mrs. O’Brien, who still did not speak. Looking at her, I saw a handsome woman, fair, with yellow hair and staring blue eyes. She wore a gown of purple silk. Amethysts spark-

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led in her ears, and on arms and neck, and a brooch of the same lovely gems caught the lace of her bodice. I ventured a remark that the evenings had grown chill. Silence! Then I said I hoped Geraldine would like me. No response! I asked if she had ever been to school. Still no reply, and it was a relief when Doctor O'Brien, who was at the farther end of the room, talking softly to his little daughter, came back, placed her by her mother, and went to the piano.

He was a true musician, and, as with wonderful touch he revealed to me the beauties of Schubert and Beethoven, of Chopin and Mozart, I listened for over an hour, charmed and entranced. Finally, he turned, saying, "You must be very tired, Miss Mabie, and perhaps would like to retire?" I rose to thank him and to say good night to Mrs. O'Brien. She sat as immovable as Memnon's statue — barring its exceptional behavior in the early morning — as white and still as the figure of Minerva by the door. As I stepped forward, my foot slipped, and I tripped, falling against Mrs. O'Brien, and pushing her over. Overcome with embarrassment at my awkwardness, I stooped to assist her. Doctor O'Brien sprang forward to intercept me, but I was before him, and with one scream — long, loud, and

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piercing — I realized that I held in my arms, not a living, breathing woman, but a wax figure — a great wax doll. Then everything grew black before me, and I lost consciousness.

CHAPTER VII

IROUSED to find myself on the sofa in my own room, with old Uncle Silence bending over me. "Is yuh bettah, honey?" he asked, in a kind, anxious tone.

"Yes, oh, yes! But how dreadful!" and I hid my face in my hands, shuddering, as it all came back to me. "Now, deary, yuh jes' drink dis hyah," and he held a glass of iced wine to my parched lips. It was cool, refreshing, delicious.

"Now, ye mus' git tuh bed regalah," and the old man proceeded to undress me as gently as if I were a baby, and I accepted his offices. My efforts to engage him in conversation were fruitless. To every question he either returned only a monosyllable, or gave no reply, and finally, having tucked me carefully into bed, he blew out the candles, with:

"Now shet yo' eyes, missy, and jest go sleep." His tone was soft and caressing, as if he were talking to a child; but when, the room quite dark, he turned at last to go, "One moment, please," I

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said, "are those people all wax?" "Yes, bress yo' life, honey, jes' nuttin' but big wax dawls. Good night, missy," and he was gone.

Immediately I got up, groped my way to the door, shot the small brass bolt, its only fastening, and climbed back into bed. I tried to sleep, but sleep would not come; I lighted a candle and tried to read my Bible, but could not concentrate my thoughts; I tried to pray, but with no better success. My thoughts would not obey my will. I felt as if I had lived years since the morning. Now and again the furniture would crack, and I would spring up in bed and listen and listen until my ears rang and I thought my head would burst. I could hear the patter of the rats and mice as they ran through the walls; they seemed to be holding high carnival. I could only think, think, think, think of the wax people in the drawing-room. With a sense of suffocation I ran to first one window and then another, and leaned far out. The night was dark, and the moon low in the sky, and the twinkling stars gave but little light. The air was filled with a delicious sweetness of mingled roses, mignonette, and the blossoms of the linden-trees, and I drank in long, greedy breaths of the perfume. I could just discern here and there a large tree rising dark, still and

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solemn. I could hear the splash of waves on the shore, and now and then the tinkle of a banjo and the croon of a song — queer and weird.

As the night wore on, a strong curiosity possessed me to see the wax figures again. Why not? Strangely excited and frightened, my desire was yet greater than my fear. I lit a candle and looked at the clock. The hands pointed to three. Slipping quickly into my slippers and wrapper, I opened the door, paused to listen, and, hearing no sound, I picked up my candle and softly and quickly walked down the passage; pausing again to listen when I reached the staircase, I walked boldly down.

The drawing-room door was open, and I entered. At once my eyes sought the spot where the wax group stood, and, as a bird drawn by a charmer, I drew near. My heart and pulses were beating, and I could almost hear the blood coursing through my veins, as I set down my candle on the floor and touched the cheek of the doll that Doctor O'Brien called wife. It was cold as a corpse, and I shivered. I examined minutely both figures; they were very beautiful, but in looking at them I felt an instinctive sense of repulsion. My curiosity satisfied, I turned to go, only to see Doctor O'Brien enter the door in bath-robe and slippers. For an instant I was para-

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lyzed with the fear of detection, but quickly blowing out my candle, I sought refuge behind the piano. On he came, with a lighted candle in his hand, with wide-open eyes looking straight before him. Instinctively I knew that he was walking in his sleep. Placing his candle on the piano behind which I was crouching, he took the large doll in his arms with words of endearment and caressing tones. "Did she knock my darling down? Never mind, my own. See, so I kiss the hurt and so extract the pain?" Then he kissed her many times. After about ten minutes, he quickly walked from the room, I following at a safe distance, almost afraid that the throbbing of my heart would awaken him. Reaching the upper floor, he turned to the left, and soon I heard a door close behind him, as I ran swiftly and noiselessly to my room, secured my door, and, throwing myself on the bed, again made a vain effort to sleep. A breeze had sprung up, there was a murmur among the trees, and the waves sounded louder on the beach, but the sound of the singing and the banjo had ceased.

When at last I fell into a fitful slumber, it was only to dream, and such a dream! Long ago as it was, I can recall every incident. I could see the wax figures moving about and talking — and I was

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with them. Presently Doctor O'Brien came in with two hatchets, and, giving me one, told me to strike, and together we proceeded to demolish them, until, when they lay in atoms at our feet, I fainted. Then the scene shifted, and I saw Doctor O'Brien lying in a tent, and I was kneeling by his side with his head in my arms.

I awoke with a start, as day was breaking and the morning star was fading. It was the first hush of dawn. Over the water a silver veil seemed to rise, and far out on the verge of the horizon was a line of clearest amethyst, which, changing to palest rose, deepened and deepened as the day drew on, until the east glowed like the cheek of some fair young girl. I watched from my pillows the opal mists fade as the diamond dewdrops on the lawn caught and threw back the golden rays of the rising sun; and at last, lulled by the song of birds, in the midst of all the glory, and beauty, and sweetness, and fragrance of the new-born day, I slept again.

The sun was shining brightly through the wide-open windows when I awoke. My mind instantly reverted to the experiences of the previous night, and I shuddered at the thought of what was before me. Indeed, to be shut off on an island with a madman, two wax figures, and two old negro men,

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would have brought terror to a braver heart than mine.

I sprang out of bed, took a cold sponge bath, dressed quickly — this time donning my pink organdie — and hastened down-stairs. No signs of life were visible as I peeped into the dining-room, where the table was again laid for two, with a large bunch of pink roses at my plate. Shudderingly I looked into the parlor, where, with shades close drawn, the wax woman and child sat in the gloom. Out on the wide piazza I breathed more freely, and soon forgot all in the entrancing scene, which was even more beautiful now than on the evening before. The faintest breath of morning swayed the leaves, spreading a tapestry of mingled light and shadow on the beautiful turf far down to the silvery beach, where the incoming tide broke in sparkling waves, crested with foam. Beyond, the limitless blue of the water stretched far away to its meeting with the turquoise sky. Above, the gulls swirled to and fro, and here and there a kingfisher sailed gracefully, or poised before making a rapid dart into the wave for its breakfast.

From the steps at the end of the piazza, along the garden wall, half-hidden under a mass of graceful, clinging vines — ivy, Virginia creeper, honey-

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suckle, and clematis — a narrow pathway invited me to investigate beyond gates whose high posts were surmounted by boxes of nasturtiums and petunias. The garden, "L"-shaped, ran across the end and along the back of the house; wide, well-kept grass walks extended through the middle. A quaint sun-dial of antique bronze accentuated the angle of meeting, and the beauty of the close-clipped grass was heightened by contrast with the brilliant flower borders on either side, where carnations and sweet-william, marigold and verberna, mignonette, johnny-jump-ups and bachelor's-button, and the many-colored phlox were massed and backed by a low hedge of box, and this again by high bushes of magnolia, althea, flowering almond, Scotch broom, and the fragrant purple shrub and roses of every tint — pink, crimson, white, and yellow. Between the hedge and the house, against which hollyhocks and brilliant petunias lifted their heads, the low flowers were repeated in endless profusion, in beds bordered with box, and laid out in odd shapes — diamonds, Maltese crosses, triangles, etc., presenting to the windows a mass of color and perfume. On the farther side were the vegetable and strawberry beds, gooseberry, raspberry, and currant bushes, the hotbeds being at the lower end,

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near the kitchen, where the old-fashioned herbs — sage, parsley, and thyme — grew close to the sheltering wall. I had never dreamed of such a garden, and, lost in its beauty, unconsciously I repeated from “The Winter’s Tale:”

“ ‘The climate’s delicate ; the air most sweet ;
Fertile the Isle.’ ”

Almost immediately, Doctor O’Brien’s voice answered:

“ ‘The paradise of Irem this . . .
A garden more surpassing fair
Than that before whose gate
The lightning of the cherub’s fiery sword
Waves wide, to bar access.’ ”

I turned to find him smiling down upon me, his wonderful eyes aglow.

“You are right, Miss Mabie; so is Shakespeare, and so is Southey,” he continued.

“Are the lines you just quoted by him?” I asked.

“Yes, from ‘Talaba the Destroyer.’ The Garden of Irem is spoken of in the Koran. It was laid out for a King of Ad, named Shedad, and was the most beautiful of all earthly paradises. But when it was finished, the death-angel struck it with the

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lightning-wand, and it was never again visible to human beings."

"I hope nothing of that kind will ever happen to your garden."

"I hope not," he replied, in a musing tone, "but who knows — who can tell?"

He made no reference to the past evening, nor did I. Indeed with his coming all its horror had vanished, and, thinking only of the present delight, I exclaimed: "How beautiful your home is, Doctor O'Brien."

"Yes, beautiful. I love it dearly," he said, as, looking at me intently, he turned away. I wandered from one flower to another, and then turning, retraced my steps to where he stood with head bent down, in a reverie, from which he roused as I approached.

"I am glad you like Thomond, Miss Mabie. It is beautiful at all seasons — spring, summer, autumn, and winter. I hope you will remain with us for a long time. My wife, although she says nothing, has taken such a fancy to you. She is a great invalid, and is very often ill."

"Has she been an invalid for long?" I asked, falling into his mood.

"For eight years," he replied. Then, as I re-

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mained silent, he said: "This garden was laid out by my grandfather, Turloch O'Brien, and his wife Clare. Come, I will show you where they sleep," and he led me to where a low postern gate opened into a small cemetery — a green space enclosed by a high hedge of privet and holly-trees, whose dark, glossy leaves half-concealed, half-revealed the beautiful scarlet berries. Overshadowing two graves, a large granite cross surmounted a square monolith, on which was carved a coat of arms. Three lions passant; the crest, an arm issuing from a cloud bearing a sword. Beneath it the motto: "*Lamh laidir an nachtar.*" I carefully spelled it out, and asked Doctor O'Brien the translation.

"It is early Irish, and has various translations, but the one I like best is 'The Strong Hand Uppermost.'"

There were many headstones showing only names, which interested me much. Eileen; Lilah; Geraldine; Bride; Beryl; Moira; Nora; Clare; Doreen; Myles; Lucius; Murrough; Turloch; Brien; Connor; Leige; Dermot; Donough.

"Why," I exclaimed; "these are all Irish names, except those that are not!"

"Why, yes," replied Doctor O'Brien, quizzically. "O'Brien is hardly Italian or Spanish."

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I was confused, and blushed, but he continued, good-naturedly:

“Yes, we are Irish. Why, do you know that over one-third of Washington’s army was composed of Irishmen or Irishmen’s sons; and Washington’s own adopted son, Custis, in his memoirs says: ‘Ireland furnished one hundred men to one furnished by any other foreign nation to Washington’s army.’ Yes, we are Irish, and are proud of it. Perhaps you would like to hear the history of my family, and, as you are now one of us, I will begin at the beginning:

“‘Once upon a time,’—in the words of the stories we love,—I think about the year 1794, but I am a little hazy in dates, Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent,—the fourth son of ‘Farmer George’ Third,—the father of the present Queen Victoria, came to America as governor of Nova Scotia. He brought with him a large suite, composed principally of younger sons of greatly impoverished, but noble, families.

“In this entourage was my grandfather, Turloch O’Brien, the duke’s personal friend. He fell in love with a young Nova Scotian, and when the duke returned to England, he remained behind, and

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married, and my father was a younger son of this family of American O'Briens.

"Our ancestors were the ancient kings of Ireland, and we are descended from the royal line of Thomond — a race of kings and princes.

"Brian Boroihme, our great progenitor, began to reign in 1002, and was killed at the battle of Clontarf in 1014. His grandson, Turloch, or Turlogh, was made King of Munster and principal King of Ireland. He died leaving four sons: Leige, Mortogh, Donough, and Dermot.

"Dermot became King of Munster, and from him was descended Connor O'Brien, who, inaugurated King of Thomond in 1528, died in 1540. His legal heir, Donough, was set aside, and a younger son, Murrough, occupied the throne. But Connor was the last King of Thomond who exercised the functions of royalty, and Murrough, surrendering his kingdom to Henry Eighth, was made Earl of Thomond for life.

"Other titles have been given the O'Brien family as compensation: Baron of Inchequin; Earl of Inchequin; Baron Tadcaster; Marquis of Thomond; Baron of Thomond. We are descended from Donough, — the one set aside, — and therefore can claim no title.

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“My grandfather, after the departure of his royal friend and patron, found Nova Scotia too small and Halifax too dull, so he drifted down into the States, and finally to Baltimore, where, learning of this island, fancy led him to establish a new Erin in a new world; so he bought this place and laid it out as you see, naming it ‘Thomond.’

“He was called the ‘King of Thomond,’ as was my father and also myself. The negroes and many of the whites always speak of us as the kings of Thomond, partly in derision, but often, I think, using it as a term of affection. There you have our story, and we are a queer lot.”

My experience was limited, but, if he were a sample, I agreed with him.

“Well,” he continued, “I am the last—the very last, except, of course, my daughter. But come, it is breakfast-time, let us go in,” and silently we walked toward the house. The man fascinated while he repelled me, and again I was disquieted.

We were met at the porch by a little negro boy of about ten years. His black wool, twisted with white thread, stood out like innumerable horns. His one garment was a long smock of blue domestic, falling from neck to ankles, showing his bare feet, girded at the waist with a rope, and with slits

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through which the arms were thrust. His skin was jet-black — a hue that one now rarely sees among the negroes. His eyes, bright and black, were crossed, his full lips very red, and his nose flat. In fact he was a true Guinea negro. He stood like a statue until we approached him, when, taking his skirt in his two hands, he bobbed a curtsey, saying, "Massa' 'Brian, brekus' is sarved fuh yuh'sef, King Thomond, and de young miss," and, following us into the dining-room, he took his station behind Doctor O'Brien's chair, armed with a huge fly-brush of peacock feathers.

The breakfast was but little less elaborate than had been the supper: an omelette, fresh fish, fried chicken, jams galore, waffles, hot pone, hot biscuit, and coffee.

The doctor apologized for the non-appearance of his wife, saying that, with the exception of himself, they all rose late, and that both mother and daughter breakfasted in their own rooms. All this without the slightest allusion to what to me was the tragedy of the previous evening.

I enjoyed the breakfast, but even more — the way it was served: the fine napery, beautiful silver, and glass and dainty china; and Uncle Silence, who waited on us, certainly merited his name. It seemed

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as if I had always been used to luxurious living such as this, and, a child of a day, I looked neither forward nor behind.

Breakfast over, Doctor O'Brien rose with: "If you will excuse me, I will see at what time it will be convenient for my little girl to receive her first lesson, and will advise you later," and then, as he turned to go, he added, anxiously: "I am sure you will be very patient with my Geraldine — will you not, Miss Mabie?"

Too surprised to speak, I bowed my head in reply.

"Come," he said, and, obeying his motion, the negro boy followed him from the room.

I sat where he had left me for some time, pondering what I should do. Should I leave Thomond, where could I go? With no home, no friends, no money except a few pennies, and no experience, to whom could I apply? No, no matter what happened, I would stay and brave it out. After all I could but die, and life had not been so sweet that I viewed that as unmitigated ill, nor had I realized that there are things far worse than death.

Suddenly the little "nig" stood before me, with a card in his hand: "Fum de king," he said. It ran:

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"MISS MABIE: If agreeable to you, will you meet Geraldine in the library daily, at eleven o'clock? I would suggest that the lessons be not continued longer than three hours, and for the rest of the day, consider yourself disengaged.

"Yours,

"BRIAN O'BRIEN."

A glance at the clock showed me it was then 10.30; so I went to my room, but had hardly closed the door when there came a tap, and, in answer to my summons, in walked the little negro boy. We gazed at each other in silence for a minute, and then he said:

"I'se Hero."

"Why, that is a girl's name."

"Yes, miss, I know. Mom had ten daughters, an' I was 'leben, an' when I was bornd, she kinder run out o' names. But she got so in de habit of callin' gals' names, dat she up an' ax' Miss Geraldine to git her a nice gal's name fur me, dat sound like a boy's. Den Miss Geraldine tell her 'bout a man name Lander, dat swum 'cross hell ebery night to see a girl named Hero. Mom, she didn't like Lander, 'cause it sounded like Zander, an' dat war her fust husband's name, but she liked Hero,

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'cause it sounded kind o' manny; so she name me dat. She uster wonder if Lander saw dat Zander when he was a-swimmin' in dat hot water. Mus' a bin awful hot swimmin'. I fell inter de hot suds onct. My golly; but I'll nebber forget it neder."

Surely this was a new version of Hero and Lander.

He continued his monologue.

"I clum de highest tree on de lawn yistiddy. I jes' want to see yuh befo' de od'er niggers did. Unc Bedfoot, de old nigga dat tends de hosses, says you'se a Yankee, and I want 'o see what dat war. But bress my sold, yuh don' look no diff runt aftah all; jes' like de rest ob de white ladies — only you'se puttiah."

"Unc Cotton, he say dat you had de kloven foot, and a long hary tail sticken' out from undah yo' dress, an' twisted horns. Unc Pompey, he say dat yuh had green har like de mermaidings. I fought you'd hab a gold ring in yo' nose fo' sho. But I mighty glad yo' ain't.

"See my cock-eye? Dat's 'cause Surajah — dat's de king's dog — play wif my eye when I wos a baby. Niggas warn't nebber made fur puppy dogs to play wif.

"Say, miss," he continued, "does yo' know

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you'se de only 'oman on dis place? My mom was de last one, and she runned away. Now master had on'st men in de qua'tahs. Dah's five on de farm, and deys all free niggas. De old king sot all his niggas free, and den he hired 'em agin. All de women left, and all de men, 'cept ten and me.

"Now dere's Unc Silence, de butler; Unc Shadow, de boatman; Unc Cotton, de cook; Unc Bedfoot, de hostler; Unc Pompey, de chambermaid and washer, and Ben, Sam, Stoke, Columbus, and Tony, de fahm hands. Dey all lib dah in de qua'tahs," and Hero pointed through the window, where I could see a group of whitewashed cabins in the distance.

Just then the clock struck eleven, and I asked Hero to show me to the library. It was a large, pleasant room, adjoining the dining-room, its two windows opening on the piazza. The walls were lined with low cases of books, many in rich bindings, and all within easy reach; and above hung pictures in both water-color and oil. Chairs and tables, — Chippendale and Sheratin, — leather-covered, were scattered about, and the wide fireplace held logs ready for lighting.

In one of the deep chairs close to a window, beside a table on which were writing materials and

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school-books, sat the wax child doll, — Geraldine, — dressed now in a lilac gingham. For a minute I stood paralyzed at the complexity of the situation. Then I laughed; then I cried, and then I went over and took the doll in my arms, when something swept through me. It must have been the strong mother instinct latent in every woman. After I had “wept my little weep” I dried my eyes, refreshed and ready to think it all out. Yes, I would remain for a month at least, and work out my freedom and carve out my own fate.

After a time, opening a volume of Byron, I was soon immersed in “Childe Harold.” The rhythm fascinated me, and I began to read aloud. Next I found myself studying with globe and map some of the places mentioned, with which I was not familiar. Then I got a dictionary and went to work, and later, taking up a slate and pencil, I gave Geraldine a lesson in arithmetic. Thus interested, the dinner-hour surprised me, and I found that I had spent a very profitable morning, and I ran to my room to brush my hair and tidy up for the meal.

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN I entered the dining-room, Doctor O'Brien was in his place waiting for me.

"Well, Miss Mabie, how did the morning go?" he asked.

"Very pleasantly," I answered.

"Are you tired?"

"No! Not at all."

"Were you patient with my little girl, and was she attentive?" he asked, looking me straight in the eyes.

"She was as quiet as if she were made of wax," I replied, "and she was very good."

"Ah," he replied, confusedly, "that is good. I hope you will spare no pains with her, and that you may mould her into as charming a woman as her teacher."

I made no reply, and he resumed after a short pause:

"Mrs. O'Brien, as I have told you before, is very delicate, and not equal to the excitement of punishing Geraldine. I hope when she needs cor-

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rection you will not hesitate to administer it without consulting her or me," and, as we finished dinner, he asked: "Are you happy?"

"Doubtless I shall be," I replied, evasively, rising and moving toward the door, which he, bowing courteously, opened for me.

No longer oppressed by indecision, my heart was light, and unconsciously I sang aloud, as I ascended the stairs. Doctor O'Brien called me back to compliment me on my voice, and, finding that I really knew nothing of music, he offered to teach me, and together we entered the drawing-room, where the wax wife no longer presided, and he gave me my first lesson on the piano. Then he proposed a sail, and sauntering down to the beach, we entered the boat and soon we were floating between sea and sky.

A perfect June day was present in air and sky and water, and yielding to its charm, I lay back on the cushions and dreamed and dreamed, not attempting conversation. Now and again we would pass a fisherman or would catch the refrain of some negro melody, as the oystermen plied their tongs. The sun was setting as we turned toward home, and Doctor O'Brien, picking up a guitar, sang as I believed he alone could sing. His voice was a light bari-

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tone, and his song I can never forget — a song whose beauty and simplicity, tender words and rippling measure, will linger with me always:

“ Now sunlight dies, and over
The valley reigns delight,
And happy is the lover
That wanders there to-night :
For ev’ry heart uncloses
And old and young arise,
To hail the feast of roses
And bless it as it flies.

“ No sound is heard but pleasure,
No echo on the gale,
But music’s varied measure
Along that happy vale ;
For all that sense can covet,
Each joy that earth can show,
Is lavished there to prove it
The brightest spot below.

“ ’Tis said the world before us
Is one continued flow
Of joy with those that love us,
Perhaps it may be so :
But if this earth discloses
Delights unknown elsewhere,
’Tis at the feast of roses
Within thy vale, Cashmere.”

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That evening I wore my blue dress, fastening some white roses in my hair, and when I reached the hall, Doctor O'Brien, meeting me as before, said, as he led me to the dining-room: "My wife and daughter will be with us at supper this evening."

A chill came over me—a cold presentiment of coming ill. There, in very truth, on either side sat the two wax figures, and my seat was at the head of the table. Silently I took it, and as silently was served, while Doctor O'Brien, passing lightly from one topic to another, entertained me so delightfully, that his strange family might for once have been mere table ornaments. In fact my attention was completely diverted from them, until the fruit was served. My host had gradually fallen into a fit of abstraction, when I was suddenly startled by a voice, soft and low, apparently issuing from the lips of the wax woman. "It has been a lovely day, Miss Mabie. I hope you enjoyed your boat-ride." I glanced at Doctor O'Brien, but he was evidently just then talking to the doll—Geraldine. Uncle Silence and Hero had left the room. Could my ears have deceived me, or was I, too, going mad? The thought was unbearable. I said: "Doctor O'Brien, did you speak?" Before he

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could reply, the voice broke in: "No, he did not. It was I."

I started in terror; the dainty cut-glass goblet I let fall was broken to atoms, but all unheeded by me, for I heard only: "You clumsy girl, to break my beautiful glass!"

Doctor O'Brien, now leaning back in his chair, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, seemed to hear nothing. "Doctor O'Brien!" I called. He took no notice.

Again I spoke. Still no reply. The third time I raised my voice. "Doctor O'Brien!" He started. "Yes, Miss Mabie!"

"Doctor O'Brien, what does all this mean? I am terrified beyond expression. Tell me who was speaking just now. It is all so strange and I am so frightened." He rose and came to me with an awakened look in his beautiful eyes and a tender pathos in his voice, that recalled the midnight scene in the drawing-room.

"I am so sorry. I did not mean it, believe me. I have lived so long alone with my family, who are mutes, you know, that we carry on regular conversations—I am something of a ventriloquist. But believe me, I spoke just now unthinkingly, from mere force of habit, forgetting that you did not

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understand. Indeed I could not willingly frighten or annoy you." Then he added, gently, as though talking to a child, or to a patient with all his professional instincts aroused: "Your hands are quite cold. Drink this," and, as before, he put a glass of wine to my lips.

"Now let us go into another room, and you will soon feel better." He led me into the drawing-room, and, placing me in a chair beside a window overlooking the moonlit garden, he went to the piano, playing softly, filling the twilight with delicious harmonies, so soothing that I forgot everything, until I roused to find him again beside me.

"Miss Mabie, I fear that I have wronged you in not explaining more clearly the duties you were to undertake. Not only as governess to my daughter, but as companion to two mutes, and a lonely man; sometimes, I think, the loneliest man in all the world. It was all in my mind apparently so simple and so easy, that I did not realize you would find any difficulties."

"But, Doctor O'Brien," I interrupted, "I am terrified and annoyed. I do not understand. I thought —"

"Yes — I know — I see now how impossible it was for you to understand my peculiar position;

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and yet — had I explained — perhaps you would never have come. And what a misfortune that would have been to us all. For even in the short time that you have been with us, we feel that your loss would be irreparable. My wife, as I told you, is much pleased with you. I believe you will be everything to Geraldine, and to me your companionship will atone for years of loneliness and sorrow. This was the hope in mind in making our engagement, and your coming has more than fulfilled that hope. But that I should have occasioned your distress by my lack of frankness pains me deeply, and I earnestly beg your forgiveness.”

With an instinctive feeling that back of seeming contradictions there was a sincere manhood, and, moreover, that the speaker was every inch a gentleman, I forgot all anomalies and accepted what he said. And so, overpowered by the magnetic influences of the hour, we drifted into mutual confidences that revealed two lives unspeakably barren and lonely, brought into strange juxtaposition.

“Really, Miss Mabie,” he said, when he heard my story, “I cannot but think it fortunate that greater definiteness should not have prevented your coming. You are homeless and dependent upon your own exertions. I have a home which needs

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just such a one as you to lighten its sadness and to bring joy to those who sit in shadow. Although I engaged you as a governess for my daughter, I am equally in need of a companion; and then you are my pupil, you know, so that an extension of duties will, I trust, be to your advantage. Do not leave me, I implore you. Give me, I pray you, this opportunity for the reparation I feel I owe you, and believe that no brother, nor your uncle himself, could be a more scrupulous protector than I pledge myself to be. Now that you know all, will you not trust me, Miss Mabie?"

Courtesy, honesty, and intense pleading were all mingled in tone and manner, which could not have been more deferential had he been addressing a princess; and somehow it must have impressed me that he recognized in the situation all the majesty of a simple, unprotected womanhood.

And what did I know of worldly conventions? We were as completely isolated as were the first man and woman in the primeval Eden; and moreover, if once closed upon me this paradise, with its only friend, before me was the black world and strangers again.

"I trust you, Doctor O'Brien, and I will stay," I said.

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“Thank you,” he replied, and, rising, he went again to the piano. Oh! the infinite peace of that hour, as symphony and song succeeded one another in the now moonlit room. Eve’s lamentation with its sad refrain, “How can I leave thee, Paradise,” seemed an expression of my own soul.

Yes, I would stay, even though there was much I could not understand; and to that enveloping sense of protection and home was added one yet sweeter and so deliciously new — the assurance of being necessary to another’s happiness.

It had been an exciting day, and, too tired to think, I climbed up to my soft pillows, and, with the abandonment of childhood, forgot all in a dreamless slumber, until bright sunlight roused me to another day and the silvery chimes of the clock on the stair warned me of the breakfast-hour.

CHAPTER IX

“**I** WANT to show you our quaint old town in its Sunday garb, Miss Mabie,” said Doctor O’Brien, as we lingered over our late breakfast the next morning. “Chestertown is one of the oldest towns in Maryland; its foundations were laid by Cecil Calvert, — Lord Baltimore, you know, — and it was to have been a port of entry, but even in those days they found the Chester River was filling up, and the project was abandoned. So the old town fell asleep over two hundred years ago, and has slumbered on ever since.

“Service is at eleven o’clock, and, as it is a good hour and a half sail, we should start at once. Will you go?”

“I’ll be ready in a few moments,” I replied, and, making a hasty toilet, I joined him on the beach, and we were soon under way. The wind was fair and the ride seemed short, as Doctor O’Brien entertained me with interesting stories of the town and neighborhood; soon we sailed into the Chester River, and rounding a curve, the quaint old river-

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side town lay before us. The low shore-lines, through which the river loiters on its tranquil, placid way, were of varied green, the tints beautifully toned and softened. Lilies, white and yellow, and purple flags, cat-tails, and water-bush grew along its edge, and our speed was impeded as we glided onward by various seaweed and long, waving grasses.

The water was warm, and the air redolent with the scent of magnolia, wild rose, and honeysuckle. Soon we reached "Scotch Point," where the river curves — like the Bay of Naples, Doctor O'Brien said — and the crest of the low bluff was covered with neat little negro cabins. We sailed past a wharf and grain warehouses, where the schooners were at anchor, and where many negroes, half-clad, lay basking in the warm June sun.

Standing back with its garden sloping to the water's edge was a great villa built in the Italian style. Further on was a meadow half-submerged, across the street from which stood the old Pearce house, built of brick brought from England, the white walls half-covered with ivy, its porch supported by massive pillars, and its long garden wall, above which towered great trees — a garden which was said to be a dream of beauty. Next was a

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quaint house of a story and a half, the school of Miss Josie Redue. Close to the second wharf, where we anchored, was another large brick building, the original counting-house of the earliest merchants of the place, and now a home.

Leaving Uncle Silence in charge of the boat, we strolled up High Street, which was long and irregular, the pavements so poorly laid that we walked with difficulty, past quaint, colonial houses, one with an imposing entrance — a wide gateway with tall gate-posts; then on through the business portion of the town, where the shops, fast closed, gave the impression of a deserted village; on to the village green, with the big, ugly, pretentious hotel at one end, the court-house standing back in solitary dignity at one side. And so we came to the church, which stood in an angle; its low tower and walls of red brick the hand of time had mellowed and hung with vines.

Near it were hitched many saddle-horses and an odd collection of vehicles. The smart buggy, the antiquated yellow and gilt chariots set high and reached by small flights of steps, large, plain, ugly, square family carriages, and even an ox-cart or two. Many of the coachmen were barefoot, and all were dressed in kersey. The horses all had bunches of

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green leaves stuck in the harness as a protection against flies.

The interior was frescoed in brown, and one end of the building was separated by a low railing forming the chancel, where the rector stood. The windows were of plain, small-paned glass; the pews dark, high, and almost square.

The congregation was a large one and very reverent; I had never been in such a gathering before, and it impressed me greatly.

As I followed Doctor O'Brien down the aisle, I was conscious that many eyes were turned upon me, and I thought that even the minister glanced at me curiously, — but this may have been fancy. The organ was old and wheezy, but I soon found myself singing with the others — I who had never sung aloud before, until the happy yesterday at Thomond.

Service over, we moved slowly down the aisle with the congregation to the vestibule, and thence to the pavement, where, in local fashion, all the youth of the neighborhood had collected. Every one — and it seemed as if there must be ten thousand people — was gazing at me. Although outwardly cool, I was much embarrassed at the curious glances bestowed on me, for I was surely the ob-

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served of all observers. As Doctor O'Brien introduced me to a number of his friends, all seemed fairly cordial, but with a note of interrogation. By and by the rector came, a kindly gray-haired man, who greeted me most kindly. Every one spoke to every one else; there was a general hand-shaking and between the women many kisses. There seemed to be relations of every degree, for I heard cousin, aunt, and uncle, on every side. I noticed that every one who spoke to Doctor O'Brien asked particularly after his health, and, replying to or evading inquiry, he gradually guided me through the crowd, saying that he wanted to show me a graveyard, which lay on the other side of the court-house, and, curiously enough, was inaccessible from the church. So, turning our backs on the old church and the sunlit square, we partially retraced our steps and entered a narrow, quiet lane with grass-grown sidewalks, across which the quaint gambrel-roofs of the old houses nearly met and the sun did not penetrate. Again we turned, going up a street — rising in steps — to an old brick wall, pierced by a lych-gate; passing through this we found ourselves in a large, square graveyard, beyond which could be seen the beautiful river motionless as glass in the bright June sunshine. The graveyard, although

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somewhat neglected, was still beautiful. Under the feathery yew-trees, whose branches cast fantastic shadows, lay in long rows, with head and foot stones of various and varied designs — some crumbling away — the green mounds; over some, the long grasses swayed, but flowers were here and there, and there was a mist of daisies and gilliflowers, and scarlet poppies blazing in the sun, and the birds sang as they flitted to and fro.

We roamed from one spot to another, Doctor O'Brien telling me of the many who lay there. After a time, dropping into soliloquy, as if forgetful of my presence, he said, musingly: "And this is what we must all come to; some sooner — some later — we all return to the bosom of Mother Earth. Sometimes I pray that it may not be long for me."

"Oh, why?" I exclaimed, involuntarily.

"Because I have nothing to live for. No one to love — no one to love me," and his eyes grew dreamy.

"You have your wife and Geraldine," I ventured.

"Why, yes," he replied, "I had forgotten them."

Then he turned and looked at me and asked: "Would you be sorry if I died?"

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"Oh, yes," I replied. "For you are my only friend."

"I am glad, very glad," he replied; and silently we walked through another gate, past the curious old houses on Front Street—between which we caught glimpses of the water—down to the wharf, and soon we were sailing home.

It grew cooler as the wind freshened and filled our sails. Clouds gathered threateningly, there were low mutterings of thunder in the distance, and we seemed to sail right into the teeth of the storm. Indeed as we reached the bay it broke upon us in all its fury. The wind wailed and screamed like some wild animal in pain; the lightning flashed, and the rain fell in torrents, but Doctor O'Brien covered me with rubber blankets and a coat such as he and Uncle Shadow wore, and although the waves now and again washed over us I did not get wet, nor was I afraid. As I cuddled down under my wraps, the wind seemed to sing, and I could almost hear voices. After a time the storm abated, and when we reached Thomond the sun was shining through a lovely mist like a tender smile after tears.

Our late dinner over, we went to the drawing-room, where the wax dolls sat as before. Doctor

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O'Brien did not notice them, but, going directly to the piano, played divinely, played until the day was done — the long, fragrant summer day — and the sun in all its regal splendor sank behind the western water, and the tender twilight came on; and as all the crimson faded and passed into orange over the bay, the first great stars appeared. My soul was filled with many harmonies, and still under this spell, I slipped away to my room without interrupting Doctor O'Brien, to sleep and dream of the happiness of home.

CHAPTER X

THE next day broke cool and stormy. I was awakened in the early morning by the rain beating against my window — a steady drip, drip, drip, that promised a downpour for the day. Try as I would, I could not sleep again, for the experience of the previous day oppressed me; that sudden glimpse of the outer world, and the nameless *something* in the attitude of its people, set me thinking. Though young, unconventional, and inexperienced, I had a certain amount of shrewdness, and I began to realize in a measure my position — a young girl, friendless, homeless, and utterly without resources, alone on an island with eleven negroes and a man who might be crazy! But where should I go if I left this home, which but yesterday seemed so perfect to me? And it was perfect, and he had made it all my own; for, peculiar as was Doctor O'Brien's feeling about the wax figures, in all else he was a noble, sensible, honorable man. I recalled what I had once read in one of Charles Dickens's books — "Great Expectations," I think: "No man

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who was not a gentleman at heart ever was, since the world began, a gentleman in manner." And he was every inch a gentleman.

No, no, I could not, would not, go; I would stay to be near him whom I admired and who had been kinder to me than any one in all the world. Yes, I would stay, with God as my protector and friend; He who never deserts us, and who, although He may not give us what we ask for, in just the way we ask, yet is, we know, the author of all good gifts.

After breakfast, Doctor O'Brien said: "Miss Mabie, you have not yet seen my laboratory. If you have a few minutes to give me, I will show it you." He led the way up-stairs, and down the opposite corridor to a heavy door, corresponding to mine. Just within were two narrow, green baize doors, which he threw open, and, drawing aside a heavy portière of crimson velvet, with, "Enter my sanctum," he ushered me in.

The room was the same size as my own, the four walls lined with shelves, in which were many books; scientific works in leather bindings, many dark with age. There were bottles also and glass jars of various shapes and sizes. Some contained chemicals; others, animals, insects, snakes, and anatomical spec-

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imens. There were cases of stuffed animals and birds, and, in front of a window, Doctor O'Brien pointed out to me two skeletons — a man and a woman each. The heavy curtains of the windows, drawn back, showed the panes to be of ground glass.

Under the chandelier, in the center of the room, were two long tables separated by a space of some four feet. On the further one — a walnut writing-table, covered with green leather — was a strange collection of birds and eggs, butterflies and bugs, anatomical charts, and other curious things — retorts, crucibles, etc., that I did not recognize. There were also a large microscope, some boxes of slides, and writing materials.

The other table, supported on trestles in place of legs, was perhaps seven feet long by two and one-half broad, with a rim around it almost an inch high, and was painted a pale blue, almost white. It slanted, being at least four inches higher at one end than at the other, where within an area of six inches were six holes, each about three-quarters of an inch in circumference, and under these was placed a large, square tin bucket. I noticed on both it and the table some dingy stains and small red spots resembling dried blood or rust. I here describe all this so minutely, because the table was

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intimately associated with an after experience, and even at this, my first view of it, it fascinated me, and I found myself gazing at it involuntarily, and turning again and yet again to gaze at it. Doctor O'Brien showed me many interesting things, to which I paid but little heed; my mind wandered involuntarily, and at last, my curiosity getting the better of me, I asked, "For what purpose do you use this peculiar blue table?"

He said: "That! oh, I am very much interested in practical anatomy and everything that pertains to it, and that is my dissecting-table. I also stuff my birds, animals, etc., on it. See, here is a heron I have just finished stuffing," and he held up a beautiful bird.

In a few moments I excused myself on the plea that my little scholar was waiting for me. He held back the curtain and opened the doors, and, with a courteous inclination, left me at the head of the stairs.

Geraldine was in the library seated by the table in a dress of pale blue cashmere. I guided the wax hands to write names, and "Brian O'Brien" chimed in with my thought. I read to her history, geography, and began "Sir Charles Grandison," and so, with the range of the library, while osten-

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sibly teaching Geraldine, I was really studying and improving myself.

Doctor O'Brien did not appear at dinner, but at supper he and the wax family were both in evidence. After supper he invited me to take another lesson on the piano, and again we had a musical evening, ending with "The Feast of Roses," and as we parted at the foot of the stairway, he said, "Good night, Miss Mabie. You have brought much joy into my home and heart, and I hope you will stay with me always," and my heart reëchoed the wish, and I went to bed, so very, very happy.

CHAPTER XI

I SOMETIMES feel that I, like Doctor O'Brien, should have begun my story with the time-honored "Once upon a time." It all seems so very long ago that I sometimes — especially after I have been sick — am inclined almost to doubt that these things really did happen. Recorded by the calendar, the time would cover but a few months, but counted by heart-throbs, it might be centuries.

Here was a break of incoherency. For just before or after one of her attacks, the poor brain always seemed to be beating itself as it were into extravaganza. Indeed a singular mixture of childlikeness and maturity of thought, throughout the entire manuscript, betrays not only the unbalanced condition, but the unequal development of life leading to such condition in the sufferer. — M. W. Barr.

I kept up the fiction of educating the doll, Geraldine, and it resulted as had my previous readings

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with the epileptic girl, Clara Gray, in an education to me most valuable. And so I lived, and the time passed quickly and always pleasantly until there came a jar.

On the occasion of my second appearance at church, I noticed, or at least fancied I noticed, cold looks directed toward me by some members of the congregation. Those to whom I had been introduced seemed not so cordial, and I thought the rector was a little formal. It was merely a shade of difference; but there was a difference.

The following Wednesday the rector and a Mrs. Carroll called. Hero brought me their cards, and I went down at once and received them in the hall. Both rose and shook hands, but in a fashion so formal and frigid that I confess I was both awed and frightened.

After a few minutes of awkward silence, Mrs. Carroll said, "My dear," and cleared her throat portentously. "My dear," she began again, and coughed.

Then I took a good look at her: she was a pale, light-haired woman, with blue eyes and pasty complexion, slender of person, and wiry and nervous in manner. The rector was fat and pleasant-looking; but he was silent. "My dear," she said for

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the third time, "you are a very young woman, and I hope not a wicked one, but you must know that it is dreadful — simply dreadful, for you to live as you do on a desolate island like this, alone, with a young, unmarried man. Why, it is scandalous. Every one knows that Brian O'Brien is as mad as a March hare. My dear, we have come — the rector and I — to tell you that you must leave here at once. Why, it is not respectable for you to remain a minute longer. Now don't be offended, I speak for your good, and I only say what every one says and thinks. We, the ladies belonging to the oldest families in the country, have held a meeting at which we discussed you. Then we again discussed you at the Dorcas Society, and we all reached the conclusion that you must leave Thomond at once."

The rector remained silent, and was evidently ill at ease.

"But," I said, "where shall I go?"

"To your home, of course," Mrs. Carroll replied.

"I have none."

"Then go to your friends."

"I have none."

"Well, go anywhere."

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"Where is that?" I asked.

"Don't be impertinent, Miss —"

"I am not. I am simply a girl, without home or friends, or money, except what I earn honestly here, and I have nowhere else to go," and frightened and wounded at such an attack, made in such a manner, I broke down and began to cry.

The woman spoke again.

"Will you go?"

"No," I replied, "I will not."

"Then you are a wicked hussy," she said.

The rector here broke in.

"My dear Mrs. Carroll, pray calm yourself. I am sure the young lady is good. She only does not understand. You will go. Will you not, my dear?"

"No," I replied, "but if you are quite finished, you may go. What do I care for you — or any of the old women who discussed me so unfeelingly. Go back to them, — those Pharisees, — and tell them I scorn them as I scorn you. Go! both of you," and without a word they went, leaving me so utterly alone. Down on the floor, with my head in my arms, against the sofa I sat and sobbed, and here Doctor O'Brien found me when he came in from the fields. "Poor little girl," he said, when

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he heard all; "only you made a mistake. You have one friend; he is here and will protect you always. Never mind! The day is fine; come, let us go for a sail;" and we went and enjoyed it, he telling me funny stories of how Mrs. Carroll — one of the pillars of the church — went to daily service during Lent, after her shopping, with samples of lawn and gingham, and sat and chewed them during service to see if they would fade, hanging them over the back of the pew to dry. How on another occasion she had varnished all the prayer-books. How she would sell her chickens with the understanding — if she sold them alive — that she should kill them with her own hands. If her chickens, ducks, or geese transgressed certain laws that she laid down, she spanked them with a "spanker" that she generally wore, when at home, suspended from her girdle. I laughed heartily, but a silence fell between us as we drifted with the tide.

I thought and thought. Mrs. Carroll evidently intended to be kind, although she had a crude way of expressing herself. All anger had left my heart, but it ached and ached. I longed so to love and to be loved, and I was sorry to have people think ill of me. Tears filled my eyes, and I wondered

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would love ever be mine! And the wind, and the water, and the sky smiled as the long golden rays of the setting sun flashed us a glittering pathway home.

The season moved on. The bright days of July gave place to the scorching weeks of August, when nature seemed fairly to quiver in the heat. The shorter days and cool nights of September brought autumnal stillness to the woods, and golden mists that made the days a dream. Doctor O'Brien took me shooting and fishing; taught me how to row, sail, and to swim, providing me with a bathing-suit of blue. Indeed I should have become almost amphibious but for my delight in horses, a delight which my kind guardian also cultivated. A beautiful white donkey, which I fancied to call "Gloriana" after the good queen of fairyland, was my special favorite, but after some lessons in mounting, riding, and dismounting this gentle servitor, I was surprised to find one day at the block, led by the grinning Hero, a beautiful white thoroughbred, tossing his head as if proud of his gay caparison — a brand-new bridle, and a saddle across which was thrown a habit of fine green cloth. I stood stupefied with amazement as Hero ducked his head. "Fo' yo'sef, missy. Fum de king. Yo'r 'berry

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oan,' he say." "For me!" I, who had never known the delight of possession, excepting only that one incident of the purchase of those dresses, to own a horse — and such a horse! I could not believe it, until a voice from behind me suddenly gave the assurance: "Yes, your 'berry own.' I hope you'll like it, Miss Mabie, and that we shall have many happy rides together, both here and on the mainland." "Oh! Doctor O'Brien, how can I ever thank you?"

"Just don't, I beg of you, for it is pure selfishness for me to secure thus a companion in an exercise to which you well know I am devoted. Now run away and don your habit, — I am anxious to know if I have made a good guess at a fit, — and we will try the mettle of your steed."

Quickly I followed his bidding and was again at his side, with: "Oh! Doctor O'Brien, how did you do it? I have never had a dress fit so well." And indeed the closely fitting basque, with its three rows of small gilt buttons, did accentuate my figure, which was slender and petite, to the best advantage. On my toilet-table I had found a felt hat, with curling ostrich plumes of the same dark huntsman's green; and Doctor O'Brien, smiling, extended to me a pair of yellow gauntlets and a little whip, gold-

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tipped, and bearing my initials. Never was a girl so happy!

“But tell me, how did you do it?”

“Oh! it was all very simple. Your height I already knew,” measuring, laughingly, the top of my head with his arm. “‘Just as high as my heart,’ you see; and your long coat, hanging in the hall, afforded all the measurements my tailor required; and he managed the rest. So there is the matter in a nutshell. Now shall we be off?” And with scarcely a touch of my foot to his hand, he lifted me with easy grace into the saddle. Oh! the delight of that ride and of many, many after ones!

My horse was perfectly gaited; first a delightful pacing so smooth that I believe I could have carried a glass of water unspilled in my hand. This, with increased speed, passed rapidly into a long, loping canter most exhilarating. Through field and wood and out on the firm beach we went, enjoying the light breeze and the sunset glow over the water, and, as reluctantly we turned our horses' heads, the wonderful comet of that year gleamed a strange jewel in the western sky.

“There, Miss Mabie, — I've been wondering what you would name your new possession? What do you think of Comet? Surely in both speed and

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color he emulates it! Just see how that white tail spreads to the very zenith." It was indeed a vision of beauty, and we lingered, enjoying the witchery of the twilight until our horses grew restive, and we turned toward home — that sweetest of words — how I loved to use it.

CHAPTER XII

OCTOBER came with its dropping nuts and its scarlet and gold; when the quail whistled "Bob White" in the stubble, or the whirring covey rose from the pursuit of the dogs. How beautiful the sumach berries were, and what fun it was to hunt the chinquapins and chestnuts in the long afternoons. But we never went to church, nor did we even mention it again. In the early part of the month, Doctor O'Brien told me there was to be tournament at Queenstown. A young man, successful at many previous jousts, had challenged the entire "Eastern Shore" as the champion of Queen Anne County.

Doctor O'Brien had consented to ride as the Knight of Thomond, and he practised every day, riding for the ring, with Hero and me for an admiring audience. Indeed it was a delight to see him mount his beautiful black mare, "Mavourneen." She was lithe, delicately limbed, and high-spirited, yet gentle as a dog, and seemed as proud of her rider as he of her. And so through all those glori-

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ous autumn days we watched with pride the increasing skill and grace he acquired in this daily practice.

“Now let us discuss costumes,” he exclaimed one afternoon, throwing himself on the grass beside me, as Hero led Mavourneen off to the stable.

“The Knights of Thomond have no precise record in this respect, so we may indulge our imagination all the way from a full suit of armor — not very practicable by the way — up to any gala dress that fancy may dictate.”

“Why not emerald green?” I laughingly replied.

“Ah, you are thinking of St. Patrick! Yes, but somehow I always fancied that thought of one ‘who wore the white flower of a blameless life’ — Sir Galahad. What say you to a suit of white?”

“Beautiful!” I exclaimed, “with trimmings of silver, and the cap might have the suggestion of a crown, in wire.”

“Yes, and to bring in your St. Patrick, the silver braiding of the cloak might have the suggestion of his clover leaf. There you are, Miss Mabie; and now that we have started our idea, let us search out its conclusion. There are some chests of old things in the garret. We might find something there to help us.”

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Eager as two children seeking a toy, we climbed into the low-roofed attic, where we found many trunks and two old-fashioned chests. One high, with deep drawers, the other with carved lid. Seated on this, I watched my companion draw from one or another the raiment of a dead past. There was an odd commingling of styles in cloth, velvet, and silk. "Here is the uniform of my grandfather, the progenitor of the American branch."

I shook my head.

"No? Well, what of this, which must have been worn at some high function," displaying a suit of white-flowered satin, with knee breeches, silken hose, low shoes, and jewelled buckles. The waistcoat was long, and the deep lappets on neck and sleeves of the long loose coat turned back, displaying ruffles of fine lace.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "there must be a peruke somewhere to go with this!"

"Not exactly," he replied, "but see," and, unlocking an inner drawer, he showed a coronet — a narrow band, with an odd ornament in front, terminating in three sharp points of gold.

"The very thing for your cap. But then you could not ride with ease in this suit. You would spoil it. And it is hardly suitable, do you think?"

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"Well, I might have one made in this fashion," and he showed a suit of green cloth with tight-fitting jacket and buskins, and short shoulder-cape.

"That is better, and you could still wear the coronet in your hat."

"Oh! if you have a fancy for coronets, let me show you the wedding-dress of my great-grandmother, made for her presentation at court. But I must ask you to rise, for it is in that very chest on which you are seated."

I rose in eager haste, and together we peered into that repository of the long ago, where lay a dress of lustrous white satin, under a veil of rare lace. Doctor O'Brien shook out the folds, and, holding it up to me, exclaimed: "I do believe it would fit you. I have an idea. But it is too late to discuss it now. Come, we will take these down with us, and after supper we will try them on, and have a little masquerade of our own." So, gathering them up, we left the attic to the ghostly shadows of the gathering twilight. At supper Doctor O'Brien chatted lightly on one topic and another, but, curious and excited, I could not eat, and, observing my abstraction, he sent me away with the laughing injunction to dress quickly and join him in the drawing-room.

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I ran up to my own room, where the shimmering satin shone up from my sofa. The petticoat was sprinkled with creamy roses; the bodice was square-cut, filled in with rare lace that stood up as a ruff behind; the tight elbow sleeves were finished with ruffles of satin and lace. The open overdress, bordered with gold lace, fell straight in front, from shoulder to foot; the back, pleated at the neck and held in slightly at the waist, swept out in a long train. Trembling with excitement, I began to dress. Yes, he was right. It fitted perfectly. Even the satin shoes with high heels I could get on, although I could not at first walk in them; but at last I entered the drawing-room. Involuntarily my eyes sought the wax figures, but they were hidden from view by the piano, which had been drawn out.

Doctor O'Brien came forward to greet me. Could it be he?

"What a transformation and how becoming!" we exclaimed, simultaneously, and then broke into peals of laughter as we advanced and receded before the long mirror, bowing and curtsying, the costumes seeming to impart to us something of their own peculiar stateliness and grace.

"And now yet another transformation! See the

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coronet I had to show you," said Doctor O'Brien, as he lifted from the pier-table a tiara of glittering stones, and placed it on my head.

"There, your costume is complete. And now, my lady fair, that our discussion has materialized thus far, will you hear me to the end? Let us carry out both suggestions, yours and my own. If I win, doubtless you are aware that you win also. Yes, you need not look so mystified. Of course, I ride for you — and only you. Now what more fitting than that I should wear your colors. And this riding-suit here is but a shade different from your own. Then, too, it is, as you yourself intimated, the proper color for one of the Emerald Isle. So it is just as it should be, and nothing could be more appropriate. But for the ball, our riding-costumes are not so fitting, and here we are, without parleying, in true masquerade, the King and Queen of Thomond — crowns and all." Yet still I stood stupefied with amazement.

"You ride for me? Take me to a ball? I was never at one in my life, and I cannot dance."

"What delightfully new experiences! You will be entering a new world. No, you must not be frightened, Miss Mabie. I shall be with you, and you know you said you would trust me. It must

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be in this as in everything. Not dance? Come, I will teach you, but first change to your own slippers, and you shall add another to your list of accomplishments." This I did speedily, and humming softly an entrancing waltz measure, he carried me around the room until insensibly I glided into it without effort.

"Well done!" he exclaimed, delightedly. "Now see what you can do alone," and going to the piano he played, marking so well the time that again I was obedient to the measure. "A little practice and your ladyship will be entirely *au fait*. Believe me, you need have no fear," he added, smiling. "But now about my costume. You cannot judge until you see me in it. Will you wait for me? It is more cheerful here," and, as we passed into the hall, quite tired out, I sank into a chair before the glowing embers, and watched him disappear up the stairs. Every inch a king, I thought, and truly he looked it. Soon he returned a veritable Robin Hood in the suit of Lincoln green, which, fitting him as perfectly as did the other, showed to better advantage the fine proportions of his splendid figure.

"Yes, that is fine," I exclaimed.

"And so it is settled," he said, "we wear our

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suits of green and of white without further thought and preparation."

"Always supposing that you will be victor," I rejoined, "otherwise we will not wear the white, but turn our faces toward the setting sun as quickly as possible."

"Not at all, please you," he said, "we are better off than most losers, for we have characters and costumes in reserve, and if not successful knight and queen of 'Love and Beauty,' we still may masquerade as the King and Queen of Thomond. But a truce to forebodings! Let us rather believe that for us there is no such word as fail."

At last the day came bright and clear and still — a perfect November day — fortunately, for the transportation of horses to the mainland was not always easy. We embarked on the barge with horses and baggage immediately after breakfast, and by ten o'clock were on shore, and rode directly to the hotel — The Queen's Arms.

The sleepy little town presented a festive appearance, the streets gay with flags and arches and wreaths of green. The hotel was crowded, but our rooms had been engaged, and we went to them immediately. At an early luncheon we met many

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of the knights, already in costume, and their friends, and I was introduced to a number of persons. The men were all courteous and pleasant, but the women were cold, shy, and looked at me askance. My cheeks burned, as, on leaving the dining-room, I heard one woman say to another:

“She is young to be so bad!” and the other replied:

“Yes. Isn’t it scandalous? I wonder where her rouge is?”

But I thought only of their bad manners, and held my head the higher, as Doctor O’Brien led me to where our horses were standing, and we rode off to the grounds, which were about a mile from the town. Dismounting at the steps leading to the grand stand, Doctor O’Brien, after finding me a seat about the center, and opposite the judges’ stand, left me to join the other knights. I became immediately absorbed in the novel situation; so much so that I forgot to feel lonely or even to notice that the seats about me were rapidly filling, chiefly with persons I had seen at luncheon, until my attention was drawn by the merry laughter and gay voices of a party of young people seated several tiers below me. There were many pretty girls and young women, but one in particular attracted me. A

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brunette with red cheeks and full red lips. The sunny brown of the chestnut in eyes and hair was repeated in her costume of rich silk. The eyes were bright; the hair, waving down on her forehead, was caught in a twist at the back, where it fell over a comb in short curls from under her hat that was little more than a wreath of scarlet poppies.

There was much chaffing and merry laughter, from which I gathered that she would likely be the chosen one of the champion.

Just here it occurs to me, Doctor Barr, that if you are not personally familiar with these jousts of long ago, my story may interest you more if I explain in detail the programme.

The race-course is straight. Over it, at regular intervals, arches are thrown, and from the center of each, at about the average height of the lance carried by a rider, a ring is suspended on a hooked wire, which readily yields it at touch. There are three rings, and each knight rides in turn, in response to call, the full length of the course in a fixed time, taking the rings without any slackening of speed. The one who secures the largest number crowns the queen of love and beauty and wins the first prize, and each in order of success also wins a crown and maid of honor.

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The judges' stand is midway, commanding an unobscured view of the track, and the music-stand near enough to be signaled.

The unsuccessful rider may return by a road back of the spectators to the starting-point; the successful knight returns amid the plaudits of the crowd, bearing his rings to the judges, and resumes position, awaiting his turn for a second charge.

The crowns of flowers and the prizes are exhibited near the judges' stand, on which the ceremony of crowning takes place immediately after the names of victorious knights have been proclaimed by a herald, and the royal party, escorted back to the town by the cavalcade of knights, opens the ball in the evening.

At two o'clock there was a blare of trumpets, and a hush fell upon the crowd. The open carriages, bearing the judges, dashed up to the stand in front of which the champion, in a scarlet suit, mounted on a superb black horse, took position, while a herald proclaimed his challenge, at the same time throwing down his gauntlet. It was lifted by another herald in the name of the contesting knights — fifteen in number — one for Queen Anne and two from each of the other counties of the Eastern Shore, as it happened.

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The cavalcade, two abreast, but led by one, rode slowly down the course as their herald announced them, wheeling to salute the champion, and then returned to the starting-point, where he rejoined them to await the summons, his being the first.

“The Knight of Queen Anne!” shouted the herald. He rode forward, took position, and at the second call of “Charge, Sir Knight,” passed like a flash of fire, taking all three rings, and came down the course to deliver them to the judges, amid the cheers and applause mingling with the strains of music. There was a visible stir in the group below me, as he doffed his hat and bowed low in passing, and the glowing cheeks of the beauty betrayed whose colors he wore. The next rider was the single contestant from his own county — the Knight of Readbourne — who took two, but lost one ring.

Again the trumpet’s blare brought silence for the herald’s call for the Knights of Kent. The Knight of Sterling rode forward, taking but one ring, and returned, greeted with laughter and the assurance that a bad beginning might make a good ending. But I knew that another than he would maintain the honor of Kent.

There was a murmur of admiration as the

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Knight of Thomond rode into the lists. "What a splendid-looking man, and how perfect his costume." And in truth it was even better than we had hoped; the girdle of gold mesh with fringed ends and the golden coronet brought out the peculiar tint of green, becoming to both horse and rider.

Mavourneen seemed almost conscious of the occasion and proud of her knight, who, with his wonderful eyes alight, bowed low with a royal grace and dignity in response to the cheer of welcome which rose almost spontaneously.

"Charge, Sir Knight!" and Mavourneen sprang forward. With an almost level gait, rider and horse seemed one, in the perfect ease with which they shot through the arches and carried off the three rings. His eye met mine as he returned with a look that recalled that first intimation: "If I win, you win." I only smiled, the only one in all that concourse of people who was absolutely quiet. I simply could not move, nor applaud; nor did I note much more of what passed as knight after knight sped on to either success or defeat, until the number of contestants narrowed to the Knight of Thomond and the two from Talbot County — the Knight of Wye and the Knight of Perry Hall. These two, however, soon dropped out, and the

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interest of the day reached a climax when it centered on a trial between the champion and the Knight of Thomond. Again and again the black horses, with their green and scarlet clad riders, flashed before the eyes of the excited audience, with grace and skill so evenly matched that one invariably hated to see either lose. Finally, becoming overconfident, the champion inadvertently allowed his lance to strike a ring, sending it far in advance of him.

The Knight of Thomond, with perfect coolness, charged down the course, and returned, bearing the three upon his lance.

The music of the band was lost in the deafening cheers that rent the air, as he presented them to the judges, and, wheeling, doffed his plumed hat and bowed low before the grand stand; and my heart throbbed as again I recalled his words: "For you, and only you."

The two knights shook hands most cordially as the herald proclaimed the awards, and together they crossed the course and mounted the stand, he of the scarlet going straight for the beauty, who flashed a glance from under her poppies at me, as Doctor O'Brien led me down and across to the judges' stand. I do not know how I could have

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been so composed and entirely at ease, unless it was that I saw the whole thing in the light of the dreams of my childhood days, and therefore the atmosphere was really more natural to me than to others, to whom queens and coronations, royalty and knighthood, was merely book lore.

Whatever the cause, it was with a half-sense of amusement that I listened and replied to the constrained remarks of my companions, of whom I took precedence as we advanced to meet our respective knights, and listened to the grandiloquent words of the coronation address, with a feeling that I was somehow a cause of embarrassment to the orator of the occasion, who had evidently prepared his remarks for another. I was genuinely sorry, too, for the beauty whom I had supplanted, and but for my sympathy for Doctor O'Brien in his victory, would gladly have exchanged places with her. To have been chosen and crowned by the Knight of Thomond was enough for me; whether queen or maid, I cared not. But that it was a nice ending to our pretty autumn plays, I realized, as after adjusting the coronet of roses on my head, and we were descending to the carriages, he whispered:

“Did I not say, for us there is no such word as fail?”

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"Oh! do let us ride," I entreated, "it will be so much nicer."

Indeed I felt I could not sit alone, a gazing-stock for that crowd, nor would it be any more agreeable to ride with the strange women — my maids of honor."

"Very good," he replied. "The horses are here, and many queens have preferred the saddle. Even the great Elizabeth herself," and, waving away the disappointed coachman, he offered his hand to lift me into the saddle, and we passed out at the head of the cortège, the other knights escorting the two carriages which contained the maids of honor.

"How fortunate we did not choose the scarlet costume," he said.

"Oh, yes! I thought of it at once. There would have been much confusion in that last tilt. How would the people ever have known? for the half of them could not hear the call."

"But you?"

"Oh, yes! I could not mistake. But indeed I am very sorry for that girl."

"And I for her knight. He is a good fellow and a splendid rider. Had you not been in it, I think I should have yielded. As it was I was bound by all the laws of knighthood to win."

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“If only to crown our autumn fête! For it has been one long fête-day.”

“I am glad you found it so. And the end is not yet, I trust.

“Now,” he said, as we dismounted, “I am going to order your dinner sent to your room, so you will have the rest you need, and can make your toilet at your leisure. Yes!” replying to my look of gratitude, — for I had no words to thank him for his thoughtfulness, — “you will not want to be mixed up with those people, and,” with an obeisance, “I will attend your Majesty in the reception-room at eight o’clock.

“But stay — one moment!” and leaving me at the door of my room, he returned quickly to place a package in my hands.

“Your Majesty’s jewels. The Queen of Love and Beauty is also the Queen of Thomond, and its king, her knight, here tenders the allegiance which is her due,” and, with a smile in his beautiful eyes that I can never forget, he dropped on one knee, kissed my hand, and passed swiftly to his room.

I opened a velvet case to find not only the tiara I had worn on the evening of our rehearsal, of large opals, each surrounded with old-fashioned

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brilliants, but an exquisite necklace and pendant, brooch and earrings, and high comb set with the same sparkling gems. The design was clearly brought out in the long earrings; pendent from a bow-knot of brilliants, a lozenge of opal, surrounded by brilliants, swung in a large hoop in which the stones alternated. Entranced, as truly as if I were in fairyland, I lost myself in a dream, half-sleeping, half-waking, but resting deliciously, until aroused by a knock at the door, and the appearance of my dinner, over which I lingered before beginning a leisurely toilet.

At last my mirror assured me that all was right, from the sweep of the silken train to the rise of the wired ruff of creamy lace, which formed a fitting background for the jewels which were to me simply dazzling.

The coronet was beautiful above the clustering roses, from the midst of which gleamed the comb, holding my hair in a loose coil, from which I had allowed one long curl to escape.

The gloves, which I found in the packet with the casket of jewels, fitted to perfection, another evidence of the thoughtful kindness that had glowed in the eyes of my knight — my king! Was ever a girl more fortunate! Surely none more

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happy than she who entered with light heart and step the reception-room where her knight was awaiting her.

Superbly handsome, resplendent in satin, lace, and jewels that matched my own, he met me with a look of tender approval, and led me forward.

“My lords and ladies in waiting, her Majesty the Queen.”

Amazement struggled with admiration on every face, as one and all involuntarily made formal obeisance, and together we entered the ballroom and formed the opening quadrille. Throughout the whole evening no woman spoke to me — but I did not mind that; the men were all courteous, and we danced until daylight — danced until the candles had burned low and the flowers had faded, and, as we rowed home in the early November morning, Doctor O'Brien sang softly the then new song which will never, never grow old — that song of Jacques Blumenthal — “My Queen.”

“When and how shall I earliest meet her?

What are the words she first will say?

By what name shall I learn to greet her?

I know not now, but 'twill come some day.

With the selfsame sunlight shining upon her,

Streaming down on her ringlets sheen,

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She is standing somewhere, she I would honor,
She that I wait for, my Queen, my Queen.

“ I will not dream of her tall and stately,
She that I love may be fairy light;
I will not say she should walk sedately,
Whatever she does, it will sure be right.
And she may be humble or proud, my lady,
Or that sweet calm which is just between;
But whenever she comes, she will find me ready
To do her homage, my Queen, my Queen.

.
“ But she must be courteous, she must be holy,
Pure in her spirit, that maiden I love;
Whether her birth be noble or lowly,
I care no more than the spirit above.
And I'll give my heart to my lady's keeping,
And ever her strength on mine shall lean,
And the stars shall fall, and the angels be weeping
Ere I cease to love her, my Queen, my Queen.”

We reached home, tired, but very happy. When we entered the hall, Doctor O'Brien, placing me in a great chair before the blazing logs, went into the dining-room, returning almost immediately with glasses and a bottle of champagne. Filling the glasses, he gave me one, and raising high the other said, “ Drink, Miss Mabie! This, as was that famous cowslip wine of Olivia's, is like the dew

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of spring, with the glint of its sunshine and the scent of its daisies and buttercups. Drink! See, I pour a libation to the health and happiness of the Queen of Love and Beauty — the Queen of Thomond — and now good night — or shall it be good day?" And as I went up the stairway, I heard him singing again, "My Queen."

CHAPTER XIII

IT might all have been only a dream once my regal robes were packed away, so naturally did we take up the quiet routine of what seemed through all those glorious autumn days a charmed existence.

True I still kept up the fiction of teaching Geraldine, but it was really, as I have said, myself pursuing a course of study; and in this, as in my music, Doctor O'Brien was my guide and mentor, and we discussed our studies without effort to keep up former illusions. In the same way, during our hours at the piano, the wax woman was as completely ignored. The exquisite weather, too, lured us continually out-of-doors, and, either in the boat or the saddle or strolling on the beach and through the beautiful wood, we were again together. He with his big lionlike mastiff, Surajah, — I with my little lamb, Innocence, a motherless waif like myself that Hero and I had rescued and nourished and petted until it followed me at call.

For me these were halcyon days in very truth,

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and I became conscious of a change and a growing quietude in my companion, also, as pronounced as it was inexplicable. There were no longer fits of abstraction or nervous excitement, and the peculiar, unfathomable expression in his beautiful eyes was exchanged for one of happiness and content. Thus the November days melted into the exquisite Indian summer as we watched the glow pass from the wood to concentrate in the western sky.

“The garnered loveliness of all seasons, as it is also the crystallization of life. Don’t you believe it?” he exclaimed one evening, as coming in he went to the piano, and, playing softly the opening chords, sang that lovely song of Samuel Lover’s, “The Indian Summer.”

“When summer’s verdant beauty flies,
And Autumn glows with richer dyes,
A softer charm beyond them lies,
It is the Indian Summer.
Ere Winter’s snows and Winter’s breeze
Bereave of beauty all the trees,
The balmy Spring renewal sees
In the sweet Indian Summer.

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“And thus, dear love, if early years
Have drown’d the germ of joy in tears,
A later gleam of hope appears,
Just like the Indian Summer ;

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And ere the snows of age descend,
Oh, trust me, dear one, changeless friend,
Our falling years may brightly end,
Just like the Indian Summer."

"It may be true," he added, dreamily, "that love strikes but one hour, but it has its antiphon far down the years, and I believe, too, the truth:

"My heart but shed its outer leaves
To give thee all the rest."

I made no reply. What did I know of love, save only its absence, unless it were found in that abiding sense of protecting care that had enveloped my life during these few happy months? I dared not question — indeed I did not want to know.

Alas, the knowledge came all too soon.

Early in December — the seventh, I remember — Doctor O'Brien announced his intention of going to New York. Important business might detain him for two weeks. He would be back at the very latest on the twenty-third — the twenty-first, if possible. He was to start that same evening.

Two whole weeks without seeing him — without hearing his voice! How could I endure it? And now I knew beyond a doubt or a peradventure that I loved him. We had been friends and almost

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inseparable companions—but I had not dreamed of this. After the first pain I was anxious to have him gone, that I might battle with my heart alone, and determine what I should do. For instinctively I felt I could not remain and continue this life of close association with a man whom I loved, but who, alas, did not love me! The thought was intolerable. Oh, could I but deceive myself into thinking it was only friendship and good comradeship! But, no, the pain was too deep, and betrayed a deeper feeling. As he bade me good-by in the hall he said, lightly: “It is the Beast that leaves Beauty this time, not Beauty the Beast. Will Beauty miss the Beast?” and I hardly had murmured “yes” before he was gone. Ah, those two weeks of loneliness and bitter pain! Can I ever forget them?

A heavy fall of snow kept me confined to the house a prey to bitter thoughts, and both books and music failed to divert me. The wax figures seemed to mock my wretchedness.

He had loved them, or at least fancied he had. Me, never! They might stay. I must go. Go!

“How can I leave thee, Paradise?”

How my soul steeped itself anew in that first bitterness. Would I had gone then. But, no. If

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without hope, memory at least was mine, and such memories.

But what to do? Where to go? were the ever-recurring, ever-torturing questions. Finally I be-thought me that my uncle had heard of this place through an advertisement. At once I searched the papers, but in vain. Yet others were advertising. Why might not I? But not from Thomond, for my mind reverted to that visit of Mrs. Carroll and the clergyman, and, inexperienced as I was, I felt instinctively that I had best not invite inquiry of such neighbors.

Finally I determined to return to Wilmington, seek my old teachers, beg their protection, — I would have money to pay my board, — and from their house seek a position. The days had dragged a weary length before I reached this decision. Then I rallied. I would give myself one week of happiness. Christmas should be added to my happy memories, and busily I bestirred myself in decking the house with holly and cedar, preparing for the master's coming.

On the twenty-first a letter came, telling me he would not arrive until the evening of the twenty-third, and requesting that Uncle Silence should meet him with three other men to take care of

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a heavy box. It was the merest business note, but, ah, to me it meant release from loneliness — the presence of the man I loved, and in a transport I covered it with kisses and hid it close to my heart.

CHAPTER XIV

THE twenty-third dawned bright and fairly warm for the season, and I could not resist the temptation to accompany Uncle Silence on the boat to meet the steamer. I felt I could not endure the waiting time alone, and now that my resolution was taken, every unnecessary moment apart would be that much lost from the pages of memory. I could not afford to abridge my short term of happiness. Then, too, it seemed so long since we had had a sail together. Surely my coming would be a pleasant surprise to him, and my heart leaped forward toward the cheery greeting of which it felt so well assured. So, in a mood almost merry, I embarked, and, as we sped along, I caught up the water rippling at the bow, kissed it, and threw it back, a libation.

A faint line of smoke heralded the coming of the steamer, and, as I watched its approach, involuntarily in thought I wandered back to that day in June when I had stood upon its deck, and a whole

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lifetime seemed compressed into those six months; truly a lifetime of experience, compared with the monotony of as many years in the past. My eager gaze soon found him I sought, standing almost on the same spot where first I had met his outstretched hand. He seemed surprised, and, I almost fancied, annoyed at my coming, for he did not return my smile; and after the most ordinary greeting he turned quickly to superintend the lowering into the stern of our boat of a long, narrow pine box, which seemed very heavy. His trunk, valise, and many packages followed, and we were soon off.

Seated with his back against the long box, Doctor O'Brien drew his heavy cloak about him, and, with his face half-hidden, seemed lost in reverie, as we turned toward home. The wind had risen, there was a flurry of snowflakes, and, seated in the bow, chilled to the heart by his coldness, I yet felt a certain content at again being near him.

“To love is greater than the love we sigh for,
I loved, and the world was mine.”

As he helped me, with his usual care, out of the boat, my heart thrilled with gladness at his touch.

“Why did you come to meet me?” he asked.

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“Because — because — I wanted so much to see you,” I replied; and without waiting I hastened into the house and to my room, where soon I heard the heavy tramp of feet, as the men bore the long box up the stairway and into the laboratory.

I made a careful toilet for supper, wearing my pretty white gown, and as, awaiting the summons, I drew a chair to the fire, Hero came in, and, squatting on the hearth, exhibited proudly a silver watch that Doctor O'Brien had bought him. Then he asked in a confidential tone, if I knew “what was in dat big box.” When I answered “no,” he said, “Neider do I, but it do hab a powerful queer smell. I had my nose to de crack, and doctor say so cross-like, ‘Git out o’ dat, Hero.’ I just lak tuh know what’s in dat box, sartan sho’, an’ I will; den I come tell yuse.” We little knew that I would be the first to learn the secret.

Doctor O'Brien met me at the head of the stairway, and, with only an inclination of the head, silently offered me his arm, and together we entered the dining-room. I was entirely self-possessed as Doctor O'Brien recounted one and another interesting point, concerning his trip, but I underestimated the extent of the strain and my power of endurance. The very sight and odor of food proved distasteful

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to me. I grew hot, then cold and dizzy, and then, half-fainting, I rose to leave the room. Doctor O'Brien came quickly to my side.

"Miss Mabie, you are ill!" he said, in an anxious tone, leading me into the hall, where he forced me to remain seated for some moments before he supported me up the stairway. He left me with instructions to keep my room until he saw me in the morning, and later sent me a delicious hot draught, which soon put me to sleep. I slept very soundly at first, and I think it must have been between twelve and one o'clock when I was roused by a peculiar whirring sound as if a saw was being driven through a hard substance. I sat up in bed to hear more distinctly, but the sound had ceased, and there was silence. After listening for some time, I came to the conclusion that I had been dreaming. The fire had sunk to a mere red glow in the fireplace, but now and then there would be a spurt of flame, which disappeared as suddenly as it came. The room was intensely cold, and, shivering, I wrapped myself closely in the blankets. I was just falling into a doze, when I heard the sound a second time — whiz-z-z-z-z, whir-r-r-r-r, whiz-z-z-z-z. I sat up in bed again to listen, and this time it was continuous. Certainly I was not

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dreaming? I must see what caused that noise. Quickly getting into my wrapper and slippers, I softly unfastened the door, and stepped out into the corridor. There it was unmistakable, and issuing without doubt from the laboratory. The thought flashed through my mind that perhaps Doctor O'Brien was engaged in some of his anatomical investigations, and as this appeared reasonable, my fears were allayed, and I turned to retrace my steps, when suddenly it occurred to me that now would be the opportunity to see what went on in that mysterious room. I had always felt great curiosity to see him at work, indeed had asked him to admit me, but he had always laughed me off with the injunction not to grow pedantic.

To-night an unseen power, as it were, seemed to impel me to investigate. My slippered feet made no noise as I glided swiftly and silently down the passage, reached the laboratory, passed stealthily the baize door, and found myself concealed behind the heavy velvet curtain, which was fully drawn. Cautiously pulling this a little aside, the sight that met my eyes was one to freeze the blood in my veins. There, stretched upon the table (which I have before described) was the body of a woman. Naked, except for a white cloth thrown over part

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of the trunk and lower limbs, she lay upon her back with her head dropped over the edge of the table, and I could see that the figure was beautifully moulded and that the hands and feet were small and delicately formed. The skin, discolored to a bluish-brown, looked like fine leather. The right arm was frightfully mutilated, and the body itself lay open, so that I could see into cavities of both chest and abdomen.

Doctor O'Brien was bending over the head. He had cut the scalp across the top and pulled it forward, until it, with the long hair attached, completely covered the face. He was sawing directly around it, and this was the whirring sound I had heard. Breathless, incapable of motion, to all practical purposes as dead as the woman who lay before me, I stood simply fascinated, and watched each detail of the dreadful sight. He began carefully to dissect out the brain, which he in a few moments removed, and transferred to a large shallow dish. Horrified at the ghastly sight and sound, I yet was strangely interested. Somehow my mind reverted to what I had heard of the human skull and spinal cord being the golden bowl and silver cord mentioned in Scripture, and in spite of my terror I involuntarily pressed forward for a closer

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view. Suddenly Doctor O'Brien, with a quick movement, replaced the skull-cap and drew back the scalp, which had been covering the face. Shall I ever forget that face? No! not if I should live for a hundred years. In that one instant stereotyped forever, it will always be engraven on my memory. Even in this abode of strange and peculiar faces there is not one to equal it. But where had I seen it? It was strangely familiar, yet I could not place it. Repulsive and even disgusting as it was, there were traces that told it had once been beautiful.

But where could I have seen it?

It was the face of a young woman of about twenty-nine. The eyes, of a deep blue color, were wide open; the mouth partly open, the lips withered and brown, and her black tongue protruded from between teeth broken and discolored. The nose was flattened out of shape by the recent pressure of the scalp. It was all horrible beyond description. Yet, fascinated, I could not take my eyes from the face, so strangely familiar. Where, oh, where had I seen it? Unconsciously, in my eagerness, I thrust my head and part of my body from behind the curtain that I might get a better view. Then I saw the resemblance, so striking, to

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the wax woman in the parlor; although on this distorted face there were traces of debauchery and abuse. As I looked, it seemed to become imbued with life. Was it possible that the eyelids quivered? No! It was only the draught that flickered the light over the dead face. My eyes were glued to the form — riveted on the face. Yes, those eyes surely returned my gaze, and the withered lips stretched in a mocking smile. I must have made some exclamation, for Doctor O'Brien looked up, and, as our eyes met, his face reflected the horror of my own. He swayed as he stepped forward with a low cry of surprise, extending his hands. They were covered with blood. I thought he was going to touch me, and, desperate and half-crazed with fear, I screamed. Shriek after shriek rang out, but there was no one to hear — Doctor O'Brien and I were the only living occupants of the house. I fled as he advanced, and, rushing back to my room, bolted the door, and throwing myself on the bed, covered my head with the pillows to stifle my cries. Alone, alone! oh, the agony of it! Soon I heard Doctor O'Brien knocking on the door imploring me to let him come to me, but in a paroxysm of dread lest he should touch me, I rolled on the floor and pushed a chair against the door.

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In complete nervous collapse, alternately laughing, crying, and wringing my hands, I went into hysterics, and at last, chilled and exhausted, I crept into bed as the clock in the hall struck three.

The wind was blowing a perfect hurricane. Now it rose in a dismal wail; then it fell to a sighing, sobbing moan like the cry of a broken heart. The rain beat noisily against the windows, the trees creaked as they swayed to and fro in the gale, and the waves dashed on the shore with a loud, sullen roar. I lay shivering and listening to the storm, and when at last I fell into a disturbed sleep, it was only an exchange to dreams equally horrible. I could see the dead woman and Doctor O'Brien plainly. Once he stopped to kiss her, and she threw her mutilated arm around his neck. Again she, Doctor O'Brien, and I were sailing away in a small boat. He would not speak to me, but only to her; and my heart grew sore and ached, and I started forward, intending to push her overboard, when — the storm was past — the bright sun was shining and Hero was knocking at the door. I waked with a sense of relief that it was all a dream. Oh, no! Not all. There was a dread reality, a presence in the house from which there was no escape, and at that thought I cowered again among the pillows, sick

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in body, mind, and soul. And this was the day I had longed for! But the importunate call at the door roused me in spite of myself.

"Missy, missy, hyah's yo' hot watah. Is yo' sick? It's ten o'clock. Don' yo' wan' no brekkus? Uncle Silence kep' it fo' youse, an' I'se gwine to fotch it up."

"No, Hero, I want nothing; but stay! You may bring me some hot milk," I said, just managing to get to the door. But the effort proved too much, and when the boy returned I was again weak and faint among the pillows. "Hyah, missy. My, but yo' does look white," he began, but he was pushed aside as Doctor O'Brien himself bent over me, holding a glass to my lips.

"This first, my child. There, that is it, now the milk. All of it, if you can," and he watched me closely with finger on my pulse as I drank. "Now you will sleep; and Hero will stay with you until I see you again," he said, as first looking deep into my eyes, he pressed down the lids with what seemed a hypnotic touch, and hardly had he gone softly from the room, before I passed into blissful unconsciousness. The afternoon sun was streaming through the window when I awoke, aroused Hero, who was asleep on the rug, and soon

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refreshed by a bath I sought the sofa, enveloped in wrapper and shawl, too weak and languid to attempt a toilet.

Hero came up with a bowl of broth, and Doctor O'Brien followed him with a beautiful basket of fruit.

"See! I must have anticipated your illness," he said, "for I bought this for you in New York. But you must have this powder first. You feel better?" he questioned, after feeling my pulse. "Yes, I felt you would have been crazed without that sleep, and perhaps you will feel better still to-night, for a change of atmosphere. No, you need have no fears, now or ever," he continued, seeing me shrink with an involuntary shudder.

"I have had a funeral this morning and disposed of all that could alarm or annoy you, and everything, even my studies and habits of life, shall change to conform to that one idea; rather I would say my one study shall be to make you as happy as you have made me. Child, only trust me, and I can explain all." My heart leaped forward to meet an assurance which quieted fears, the very existence of which he could have no knowledge. But my only words were, as I returned his earnest gaze: "Trust you? Yes — now and always."

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“Suppose we have tea in the library?” he said, in a lighter tone, “the room you have decorated so beautifully. You need only exchange your own sofa for another, and Hero and I will manage the rest.” And soon I was ensconced on one side of the cozy fire and he in the armchair on the other.

He gave me some drops at regular intervals, and, as evening closed in, poured tea and fed me as though I had been a child, and I, soothed and refreshed, soon began to regain my natural tone. I could see that he recognized this, for he watched me less anxiously, and finally, after a dreamy silence, as we gazed into the fire, he said:

“There is much that I would say to you, and I think you are strong enough to bear with me now, while I tell you the story of a life and give an explanation that I feel is your due.”

CHAPTER XV

HE leaned back and closed his eyes for a moment, and then began:

“My family is a very old one — perhaps the oldest in the State of Maryland. The first day I met you in the garden, you may remember, I told you of its origin, so I will not dwell upon that now. But I did not then tell you of a curse, which is in our blood—insanity. In every generation there have been members considered queer and erratic, with here and there one decidedly insane. Nevertheless, celibacy was rather the exception than the rule, for a race of men and women endowed with physical attributes rather above the ordinary, and possessed with a fair amount of worldly goods, had no difficulty at any period, as you may understand, in securing a suitable parti. And so people condoned the fatality, or else refused to believe that it was hereditary. Indeed, although appearing at times when least expected, it was often dormant through generations, and thus, in one of these interregnums, reaching to my time, we came to persuade ourselves

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that the brain had forgotten the lesion, and that, with the intermingling of other blood, the taint had been altogether washed out.

“My early life was quiet and uneventful. I was esteemed a clever child, though not at all precocious, and neither in boyhood nor youth did I evince any predisposition to excessive nervousness. I was just entering on manhood when I first experienced an absorbing passion. Visiting a college friend in Baltimore, Claude Archer, I there met his cousin, Margaret Archer, and in the few weeks in which we were thrown constantly together, I became enamoured of her, and found to my great joy that my affection was reciprocated. I was wholly infatuated, and the day before we parted I spent the morning in search of a love-token. I knew exactly what I wanted, and at last I found it; a ring set with a single large ruby in the shape of a heart. As I turned to leave the store, a small rock-crystal locket set in gold, also heart-shaped, attracted my attention, and I bought it.

“I found Margaret in the morning-room. She was my first love, indeed we were both little more than boy and girl, and as I placed the ring on her finger my heart bounded to hear her expressions of delight.

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“‘Margaret,’ I said, ‘do you know the old legend of the ruby when given as a betrothal ring? It retains its fire just so long as the lover’s heart continues true. But when his love wavers, be it in ever so slight a degree, the ruby pales, and if he is false it becomes white.’ I can see her now as she laughed and kissed my hand, which held her imprisoned arm, and as she looked up into my face, I said: ‘Now, will you give me a love-token?’”

“‘Gladly will I give you anything I possess; and what shall it be?’ she questioned.

“‘Will you give me one strand of your hair, just one?’ I asked, as I showed her the locket. The space within was so very small that one long strand coiled would just fill it, and when suspended from my neck it would lie directly over my heart.

“‘I will do better,’ she said, as she took it from my hand. ‘I will be even kinder than you think,’ and walking down the long, old-fashioned room, she stood with her back turned for what to me seemed an age, though in reality it could have been but a few moments. When she returned and handed me the locket, the hair was coiled in a ring, and in the center of it, upon the beautiful crystal, lay a drop of scarlet blood. ‘See,’ she said, ‘I have drawn it from my bosom directly over where

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my heart beats, and so long as I remain faithful to you it will continue red, but like the ruby, it, too, will pale should I become false. A drop of my blood, which is part of my life, is a much better love-token than a strand of my hair; but, see, you have both,' and taking a slender gold chain from her throat, she attached the locket, and herself placed it around my neck. At breakfast we announced our engagement, and received the congratulations of the family. Claude was particularly effusive.

"I had just been graduated from the University of Virginia, and with the intention of entering the medical school of the University of Pennsylvania in the autumn, I came home, expecting to remain at Thomond until October. Margaret went North with her uncle's family, making a round of the summer resorts. We wrote daily to each other, and as the engagement was sanctioned by both families, all went well. Early in September my father, my mother, and my sister, Geraldine, were all stricken with typhoid fever. My father first, then my mother, who nursed him, and next my sister. All died within a few weeks of each other, and I was left alone. I had been so absorbed in the care of the sick and in grief at my loss, that I did not

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notice that Margaret's letters had grown fewer and colder.

"One morning early, during the latter part of September, I awoke with a feeling of oppression over the region of my heart, and as I placed my hand there it came into contact with the crystal locket, which was so cold that it made me start. In the anxieties of the preceding weeks, I had not noticed it. Now I felt intuitively that something had happened to Margaret. I could not sleep again, and I arose and dressed before the sun had fully risen. The locket still lay cold upon my heart. I drew it out and beheld it clear and transparent as when I had first bought it. I could not believe the evidence of my eyes. I thought it must be some trick of the gray morning light. I struck a match in the vain hope that I might be mistaken. But, no, the crystal glistened in my hand like a dewdrop, ringed only with the coil of hair. I pinched myself, beat my head with my fists, hoping against hope that I was dreaming. But I was not. Could Margaret be false? No, a thousand times no! I would not for an instant harbor so base a thought; I could not believe it. I wandered up and down the house like a madman until mail-time. Then I took the small boat and rowed out to meet the steamer.

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The mail-bag was thrown me, and it took but a moment for me to tear it open. It contained a packet wrapped in white paper and securely sealed, a newspaper and a letter. The letter proved to be from Claude Archer, informing me in the coldest terms that three days before he had become the husband of Margaret. In conclusion he casually observed that she had discovered that she had always loved him, and regarded her little flirtation with me in the light of a joke. She returned the ring that I had so kindly given her, and requested me to destroy the locket. For further confirmation, he referred me to the newspaper. I opened it with trembling hands, and there found the notice of the marriage, together with the statement that the bride had lately come into possession of a large fortune, bequeathed her by a relative of her mother. This, then, was the explanation! When Margaret was a dependent she had no attractions for Claude. Now that she was an heiress he had taken her as a mere appendage to a fortune, and she, young and inexperienced, had yielded to his persuasions. Fielding truly tells us that man is fire, woman tow, and that the Prince of Darkness often ignites them.

“He did not, could not love her as I loved her.

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That was an impossibility. My friends whom I trusted had both betrayed me. I sat stupefied, with the letter and paper in my hands, for hours. It began to rain; I was wet and cold, but I could only think and repeat to myself, 'Margaret married to Claude! Margaret false!' It became intensely cold, and finally, roused from my lethargy by physical suffering, I started up, grasped the oars, and rowed toward home. When about two hundred yards from the shore, I stopped, well-nigh distracted by grief, tore the paper and letter into fragments, and scattered them to the four winds of heaven. Then I took the locket from my neck and, opening it, applied my lips to the spot where the blood had formerly shone so red. Instantly it seemed as if I could feel that single drop speeding through my own veins like electricity along the wires. I threw chain and locket far out into the water. As it sank, rays of crimson and yellow light seemed to shoot from it. Without opening the packet containing the ring, I sent it with equal vehemence in the same direction. For a minute it floated and then before it sank the same phenomenon occurred. I now hated Margaret Archer as intensely as I had loved her. I can tell you nothing of myself after this for a long period.

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“It is as though I had lost some time out of my life. For weeks, for months, I had no knowledge of the flight of time. I have a dim recollection of sitting here before this library fire — alone — always alone — in a lethargy from which one day I suddenly awoke. I rang the bell, and Uncle Silence answered. I asked what month it was. ‘March,’ he replied. March! I felt like Rip Van Winkle. I had slept, as it were, for six months. I learned from Uncle Silence that, alarmed at my long absence that eventful day in September, Uncle Shadow had started out at evening to search for me, and had found me lying in the boat, which had drifted ashore. All efforts to arouse me were fruitless. I had acted as one who was asleep. I ate, drank, and slept, like an automaton, knowing nothing of what I was doing; and during all this time my two devoted servants had cared for me most tenderly. Now I remembered perfectly all that had happened before I became as one dead. Physically I felt as well as usual, yet now and again, just for a few moments, my brain became clouded.

“A package of new books had come for me, which, eager to distract my mind from my sorrows, I opened. Among them I found Mrs. Shelley’s ‘Frankenstein,’ and became so completely absorbed

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that I could not lay it down until it was quite finished. My dream of love had vanished, and I was alone. Why not experiment and learn for myself the secret of life, and in some object worthy of my love, ignite the vital spark? If it had been possible with so horrible a creature, more beast than human, why not with a figure composed of pure material? It seemed rational enough.

“In a few days I started for Philadelphia, leaving Uncle Silence in charge of Thomond, and notifying my lawyer, a friend of my father’s, in whom I had every confidence, I requested him to manage my business affairs during my absence. When I reached Philadelphia I entered the office of an eminent physician, and took up a special course in preparation for my next winter’s work in the lecture-room. I spent much time in dissecting, and devoted my spare hours to the studying of psychology.

“For more than three years I worked hard, spending my vacations abroad, visiting places of interest in the old world.

“I did not study, as do many medical students, merely for the sake of obtaining my degree, but I worked with a double purpose — to gain knowledge with a definite aim in view to drown pain.

“I was graduated with honors, but there was

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no one to be proud — no one to take any interest in me. I made no friends during my college career. Human intercourse was intolerable to me. I shunned mankind; and as for women — I never voluntarily looked on one. Immediately upon my graduation I went to Paris, and there, with mind unhinged and fixed upon the one idea of creating life, had one of the finest artists model for me, in wax, two figures — a child and a woman, after a photograph of Margaret Archer, which I found in my possession upon my recovery, and which I must have retained for this very purpose. The finest materials were used, for I was wealthy and spared no expense, neither in that nor in the expensive clothing with which the best dressmakers fitted out the two figures before I shipped them to Thomond. I returned home to bend all my energies to the one purpose of discovering the secret of life. I spent days and nights alone in the laboratory, dissecting birds, animals, and the dead bodies which from time to time I had sent me, making careful microscopic examinations and chemical experiments.

“For five years I labored steadily with but one end in view — the creation of living companions whom I could love, and, although I hated her, Margaret Archer was still my model; rather it

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was my ideal once incarnated in her that I sought to regain. The human soul must have some one to speak to, some ear in which to pour its inmost thoughts. It is so hard to bear one's troubles alone, day after day and week after week; it kills slowly, but surely.

"Now and again I would imagine that I had discovered the secret, but when I attempted the practical application of my discovery upon the wax figures, I met only failure — a failure that was doubly pathetic, for their inanimate forms seemed to appeal to me in dumb despair for the life denied them; and in this common sorrow, my troubled, worn-out brain came to conceive an answering love, as it were, — a haven where my weary heart might rest, — and thus imagination accomplished for me what science failed to do.

"I had regarded them at first merely as wax figures, who might become living, breathing entities, but they grew in time to be truly the wife and child for whom I had longed, and, faithful to my ideals, I called the mother, Margaret, and the girl, Geraldine, for the sister I had lost. Margaret was a name dear to me in spite of all, and as years went on, I forgot Margaret Archer, the living woman, dead to me, or rather I found in this Margaret

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O'Brien her personification, and therefore, to me, my living wife.

"Through all these years, I have lived on alone at Thomond, almost completely cut off from the outside world, with my good servants and my sculptured idealizations. The friends of my youth smiled at me, pitied me, and finally drifted away from me; so that I rarely left the island. Some called me 'The Mad King of Thomond,' and perhaps I deserved the name, for I realize that in my solitude I became more and more erratic. In one of these moods, I advertised for a governess for my daughter. Your uncle replied. His description of you — and allow me to say that he did not do you justice — attracted me. You came, and, as one happy day followed another, in proportion as I grew to know you better and to find pleasure in your society, I thought less and less of my peculiar family.

"Then I began to disregard them altogether, and finally to recognize them as worthless dolls. Indeed I should now regard the whole phantasy as something to be ashamed of, did I not recognize that they were simply the instruments with which my diseased imagination had been building up a shrine into which" — and his beautiful eyes glowed

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with ineffable tenderness as he leaned toward me — “you were to enter and dwell for evermore. You can never know what your companionship has been to me, but this much I can tell you, you have led me from darkness into light. Your youth, and strength, and purity, your intelligence and simplicity, your cheerfulness and quietude, have held for me an influence at once stimulating and quieting, bringing me gradually day by day to a healthier plane where I can say with confidence, ‘*Non sum qualis eram sed novus homo.*’

“The unshrinking confidence with which you committed yourself to my guardianship kindled the slumbering fires of manhood, and called forth the best that was in me. Ah, Una, with your hand upon the lion’s mane — in your innocence you little knew the danger to yourself through which you were accomplishing much for me! Enough that you have brought me to where, no longer a dreamer, I look back without regret upon the past; and to the future with a perfect knowledge of what I owe to you and to myself.

“It was this that took me to New York to consult with the best specialists in brain trouble and nervous disease, as to whether my condition might not be that of permanent recovery. Some

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of these men do not believe in cure where the trouble is hereditary. Others believe that much can be effected by a total change of environment and habit of life. After various consultations, they have given me the hope that if I place myself under treatment for the space of two years, I shall then have tided over all risk, and will have a more reasonable hope of no return of the malady.

“Some days before I left New York, I accompanied a physician, with whom I was conversing, to a dissecting-room, and there, stretched upon a table, I found the lifeless form of Margaret Archer. Had I needed a test of my condition and of my feeling for you, surely I found it there, as I gazed upon what a blind infatuation had led me to believe was the incarnation of my ideal. I shuddered and turned away. And yet I could not leave her there. I must let my dead past bury its dead, and for old time’s sake give Christian burial to what had been, and might have been. While arranging for the possession and transference of the body to a cemetery, I gathered from those in charge some meager accounts, which, followed up, showed that Margaret and her husband had first become impoverished, and then fallen into evil ways. He had been killed in a drunken brawl, and she, the victim of

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disease brought on by the drug habit and dissipation, had died absolutely friendless in a charity hospital. Hardly had I completed my arrangements when an insensate desire seized upon me to discover if there might not be some brain lesion that would prove that she, too, had been laboring under some hallucination, and therefore not wholly responsible, when she deserted me so cruelly. Dominated by this idea, to which my intense interest in pathology gave added, if not primary, incentive, I decided to make the investigation in my own laboratory, and to have the interment here. That this might prove actual cruelty to you I did not realize until, unexpectedly, I came face to face with you at the steamer. There, overpowered by the conviction, I could hardly speak to you. This will explain our meeting, that must have seemed so cold to you — the meeting to which I had looked forward with such longing, through all the days of our separation.” He paused, and closed his eyes wearily. The silence was broken only by the dull ticking of the clock and the crackling of the wood fire.

“Well, frightful as it was — it was over. Would I could remove as readily all traces of it from your memory. You are better now, thank God, but what it might have brought upon you, I shudder to think

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of. I can never forgive myself, nor can you ever forgive me unless — unless — you may value the assurance it brings to you, as to me, that you are the only woman I have ever loved. If you can find forgiveness in your heart, then I know that you love me. For only love divine can condone the pain and suffering I have brought upon you. Is it so? Have I guessed aright? Will you come to me — to be my very own?"

Instinctively we had both risen; I was speechless, my heart fluttering like some frightened bird. Could it be true after all my fears — he loved me, and had loved me all this time? I cannot describe my emotions, except that through all there was a sense of ecstasy; I had reached the haven of delight.

Taking my face between his hands as he bent over me, he gazed full into my eyes, as he said, gravely and softly: "Constance, — we two stand to-night alone in the world, save that each belongs to the other. Is it not so, my beloved?" His eyes burned like flame topaz, and drew my own like a call, as I answered: "I love you more than life itself. I have never loved before — I could never love again." His arms opened wide and folded me close. My arms were around his neck. Heart was

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beating against heart, and soul met soul, in a loving, tender kiss — the kiss of father and child, of lover and sweetheart, of husband and wife.

We stood in silence — minutes — hours — weeks — months — years — centuries. We heeded not time.

“ My queen — my princess — my life — my wife! In death, in Paradise, in heaven, nothing can separate us,” he murmured at last, as he held me from him for a moment, and again crushed me close to his heart.

“ Are you sure that you love me? ” I asked, only that he might repeat his loving words, which were music to my ears.

“ Love you!

“ ‘ The stars shall fall, and the angels be weeping
Ere I cease to love you, my Queen, my Queen.’ ”

Like diamonds and rubies, the words fell from his dear lips, as again he gathered me close to his heart.

Then another question hovered on my lips: “ As you loved Margaret Archer? ” I listened breathlessly for his reply.

“ ‘ My heart but shed its outer leaves to give you all the rest,’ ” he said. “ First love is but a fancy —

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deep or light — that tempers the heart. The second is strong, lasting, and deeply passionate.

“ ‘ Even as one heat another heat expels,
Or as one nail by strength drives out another,
So the remembrance of a former love
Is by the newer object quite forgotten.’

“ Dear heart, this is my ‘ Indian Summer,’ though to-morrow is Christmas Day. Do you know Christmas has meant so little to me in the past? — but it comes to me now with a realizing sense of God’s love, for he has seen my loneliness, and has given me you, — my very own, — the sweetest and best of Christmas gifts.

“ To-morrow must be the happiest, and the merriest, you and I have ever known — our first Christmas together in our own home. We will look back to it, I trust, through many happy years — an unshadowed memory, untinged by a single regret. And now, my dearest, you are still pale. I must not let you overtax your strength. But stay! Shall we not, on the very threshold of the new life, destroy every trace of what we do not wish to bear with us? Suppose we make way with the shadows and break our dolls? What say you? But wait — one moment,” and lifting a candle from the mantel and

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seizing a lap-robe, he passed quickly into the drawing-room.

In a few moments he returned with two Indian clubs. "Come, will you help me? It is best so, believe me! You know you said you would trust me now and always." With tender thoughtfulness for me, he had enveloped the figures so completely that I could not even guess where the stroke fell, as he wielded his club, and called on me to follow.

At first I hesitated, and then as the old feeling of jealousy revived, I struck blow after blow with only the thought that I was freeing both him and myself from the thralldom of the past, and soon the cloth enveloped only clothing, and a mass of fragments.

"See, I have a box convenient," and drawing one from under the sofa, he took out some books and crammed in the robe and its contents. "Now I will tie down the lid, and put it out in the garden, and Uncle Silence shall bury the whole thing out of sight to-morrow." Lightly he lifted and bore it to the end of the piazza, as I held open the door. He returned with a face brim full of joy and merriment as if enjoying a real boyish prank, and, seizing me in his arms, waltzed me back

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to the fire, with a "Hurrah, for a merry Christmas!"

"Now our new life has begun, and I can, in very truth, wish you a merry Christmas, my darling. And merry it shall be. I have something nice to tell you and to show you, but not until to-morrow. You may sleep on that to-night and get your roses back.

"Come, I must be careful of my one treasure," he said as, half-carrying me up-stairs, he left me with one long, lingering kiss at the door of my room.

"Good night — farewell — my own true love,
A thousand times, good night'" —

he sang as he went down the corridor, and as I closed my door I drank in eagerly tones, words, and their assurance of tenderness. Even his retreating footsteps were music to me. Could it be true, and not a dream? Was I the same girl who had sunk, frightened and exhausted, upon those pillows, so short a time before? I turned to my mirror that reflected for the first time in my life a face radiant with happiness.

With an instinctive feeling of gratitude intense, I sank upon my knees to give thanks, and my last

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conscious thought as I dropped asleep was a prayer that I might prove indeed all that he had said I was to him, for surely he, too, had brought me from darkness into light.

CHAPTER XVI

I LINGER yearningly, tenderly, over these last pages, for I am loath to leave these communings with the happiest portion of my life.

“Chris’mus gif’, — Chris’mus gif’, missy! Ky’ah! Ky’ah! Ky’ah! Chris’mus gif’, missy,” and Hero’s rattle of the door-knob aroused me from a dreamless slumber to the consciousness that a merry Christmas, not a vision of the night, had really come.

“Lemme in, missy. I fix yo’ fiah. Make Chris’mus fiah fo’ sho’. You’ll be cold, for it’s a-snowin’ hawd, and de groun’s all white a’ready.” A glance at the window proved him right.

“Wait a moment, Hero,” I cried, as I slipped the bolt, caught up some things I had for him, and hurried back to my pillows. The boy burst in with a whoop and a tumble — heels over head — that took him quite to the hearth rug.

“Ky’ah! Ky’ah! Dem fool niggers say, I can’t ketch yuh Chris’mus gif’. But I kno’d yo’d lemme

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in," he chuckled, as he piled up the light wood and corn-cobs on the warm coals he uncovered, and blew a blast until he had indeed a Christmas blaze.

"Here, you scamp!" I called, and threw him a ball I had made and covered for him. He leaped like a monkey to meet it, and received full on his woolly head a blouse of gay-striped flannel that I sent after the ball. His eyes twinkled, and he looked indeed like some elfin thing as he pulled the sleeves around his neck and fairly danced with delight.

"My golly, missy, dis is fine. 'Tain't fuh me, d'o? Hi! it's good 'nuff fur Mars' Brian."

"You think so, do you? Well, what do you say to this?" and as he again scampered after his ball, I rolled in his way a round box that I had tried to shape like a drum and had filled with home-made candy. "Hi! Bress my soul. Missy, yuh suttently is good tuh me. Now I'se gwine tell Unc Silence I dun ketch ole' Kriss hisself, sho' 'nuff."

"Well, off with you now, while I dress!"

Gathering up his treasures he started down the corridor, but before he reached the stair I heard Doctor O'Brien's voice.

"Hello, you rascal! What do you mean waking

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people up this time of night? Come here, and let me thrash you."

"Laus, Mars' Brian, dis ain' night. It's Chris'mus mawnin'. Hi! hi! Lan' o' mercy! Ef he ain' got a shootin' crakah," and between the shouts of the darkey and the explosion of the firecrackers, and the laughter of the master, bedlam seemed let loose in the corridor.

"Gimme, gimme, please, mars'. You kno'd yuh fotch 'em fo' po' niggah," Hero pleaded.

"Well, here, take them along; and this, too," and I heard the rattle of a tin horn and a drum. "But first take this to Miss Mabie, and mind you don't drop it."

"No, sah. I'se not gwine drap it. Missy, missy, hyah's a Chris'mus gif' fo' you'se." I opened the door to take from him a large flat box, and hardly closed it before I heard him again.

"Hyah's a nudder. Now yuh got mos' much as me," and, shouting with delight, he ran downstairs to show his treasures.

I opened one box to find a beautiful cap and cloak of fine crimson cloth, trimmed and faced with ermine, and heavily braided with gold in a shamrock design. In the other was a breakfast wrapper of exquisite rose-tinted cashmere, embroidered down

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the front, which fell back, showing a daintily embroidered ruffled petticoat. Soft lace finished the neck and loose sleeves, and a silken cord and tassels, the close-fitting waist. As I shook out the dress, I found beneath a pair of gray slippers embroidered in pink. Surely a morning costume that would appeal to any girl's heart, and I was not long in proving that it fitted as perfectly as my riding-habit. Indeed the box bearing the name of New York's great merchant, A. T. Stewart, was guarantee sufficient that all was entirely *à la mode*.

A note fell from the folds, which ran:

“CONSTANCE, MY DARLING: I would like to make this, our first Christmas together, the happiest you have ever known; and in presenting these little gifts for your acceptance, there goes with them the assurance of my most sincere affection — both now and always. For my heart is a bank, filled with honest love and respect and admiration for you, upon whose resources your drafts can never be too large, as the accumulation is continuous, the capital inestimable, and the interest compounded many times.

Yours for ever,

“BRIAN O'BRIEN.

“*Christmas Day, 18—*”

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How I love to recall every moment of that day, and make in memory a reality of that which, when present, had seemed a very dream! The falling snow, the cold and frost outside, like my unhappy past, were shut away from me by the warmth and glow within. And I stood for a moment — as it were — apart, and viewed myself as a third person. Could it be my happy self whom that beautiful costume was inviting to prepare for a tender greeting? With a feeling that I wanted to defer and lengthen each precious moment, I lingered over my toilet, which, finally, my mirror told me was a success, and went slowly down the stairs with mingled emotions, curiously recalling the first time I had done so. Doctor O'Brien, standing in the same spot, with an eager, expectant look, sprang to meet me with an exclamation of approval, and led me into the embrasure of the window.

“My dear one, how beautiful! I knew it; when I saw it I just pictured you in it, and I could not resist the temptation to prove it.”

“How can I ever thank you?” I said, turning away, confused, from his admiring gaze.

“You cannot, dear. Love complete — entire — knows no sense of obligation incurred; only one of delicious interchange; for intense as the joy of the

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giving thrill the sensitive nerves of receiving, you know. But, perhaps," looking laughingly into my eyes, "you do not know whom you love! At least, you have not named him to me! Let me hear it now from your dear lips, this Christmas morning, for the first time!" and, with my head upon his breast, I murmured: "I love you, my Brian Boru!"

"Sincerely?" he whispered, his lips caressing my hair. "No, dearest, I do not doubt you," he said, in response to my reproachful glance. "But I love the assurance that you love me sincerely — *sincera*, without wax, as the old Latins used it — the sweetest of love words, that should be used only as the German *du* between lovers and close friends. And thus we seal our love," he said, leaving a kiss on my lips, and on my finger the ring that I have given you.

"For me?" I exclaimed.

"For none other," he answered, and he held me from him for a moment, as if to contemplate my childish delight.

"Una — Constance, you are radiant, and it makes me so happy to see you so. Yes, my own, the ring is priceless, but there is nothing too costly for you to possess, if my love can compass it, believe

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me," and in an ecstasy he folded me again in his arms and covered my face with kisses.

"Brekfus ready, Mars' Brian! Laws, wha's he gon'? I knowed he cum out hy'ah," said Hero, looking about the piazza, as we emerged from the window's kindly seclusion, and, hand in hand, gleefully as two children, passed into the dining-room, and were seated before he saw us.

"Hurry up, Hero! Why are you keeping us waiting for muffins?" called his master, and the boy came in with eyes round as saucers.

"Fur de Lawd's sake! How yuh done get hy'ah, anyhow? An' me out dah on de po'ch wid yuh, an' not see yuh cum in?"

"Well, we're here, and you scurry along there," laughed Brian, pointing to the kitchen door.

We lingered long at table, Brian drinking innumerable cups of coffee, he said for the pleasure of seeing me pour it; and I more than happy in indulging his lightest fancy. Although we had sat opposite to each other for months, yet in this day of new life, everything seemed new. When at last we rose and sauntered to the window, the rain had ceased falling and the clouds were breaking away.

"A good omen, Constance! Let us accept it!"

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We will bask in Christmas sunshine after all, and you shall have your first sleigh-ride. Is it not so — did you not tell me once that you had never been in a sleigh? You child! You do not know what you have lost! Never mind, my darling," he added, in a tender undertone, "that is only one of many things that will be made up to you. For it shall be my life happiness to teach you to forget the sorrows of the past. Now I have to see my men. The sleigh will be at the door at eleven. You must wrap up, you know, for the Chesapeake winds are piercing, and your new cap and cloak will be the very thing."

How rapidly time goes when one is happy! I suppose I must have lingered in delighted survey of my new possessions, but it did seem I had only put my room in order, changed my dress, and donned my beautiful cloak and cap, when the merry sound of bells warned me that I must hasten down. Brian turned as I reached the door, and bent his knee.

"The Queen of Thomond in royal ermine," he said, "and I her loyal servitor to do her bidding!"

"Nay, your Majesty," I laughingly replied, "in olden times, the queens were ever ready to obey their lords' behests, and such will I be ever."

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Lightly he lifted me to the velvet cushions of the jaunty little cutter, and tucked the robe around me, while the horse, impatient, shook his head and jangled the merry bells, until, giving him full rein, we were off like the wind. I fairly caught my breath.

"Why, you never told me it was like this! Why, it is faster than sailing or horseback-riding."

"Yes, but not better."

"I don't know, but it is delicious," and I cuddled down behind his shoulder to escape a passing breeze.

"Somehow it never looked like this in the city."

"Oh, no! There's no chance for fast driving in town. Now see," and we emerged from the woods and took an open road across the fields; and truly I thought no train ever went faster. The sun was bright and the air crisp and cold; and altogether the sense of exhilaration indescribable.

"Such a Christmas," I exclaimed, after we had been out some time. "A new experience every hour!"

"Well, there are yet others," Brian replied. "We will go home now, and I want you after dinner to help me with something for our men."

"I think it has done you real good," he said, as he lifted me from the sleigh to the steps. "You

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have your roses back again. But come now and get thoroughly warmed," and he drew an armchair to the fire. "Ah, see! Uncle Silence has doubly provided for that," and from a bowl of apple-toddy on the table beside us, he filled the quaint, long-stemmed, green punch-glasses.

"Drink, my lady fair! Here's a pledge to health and happiness through many a merry Christmas."

"Again something new," I said, after sipping the strange, delicious compound.

"This is both old and new. There is hardly an old homestead in Maryland that does not prepare its apple-toddy, with the fruit-cake and plum-pudding for Christmas, and Uncle Cotton is famous for all three; so this is prime.

"Something old
And something new,
Something borrowed
And something blue,"

as the old adage runs.

"Yes, you shall have all that betokens good luck, my bride," he said, tenderly. I can feel now the deliciousness of warmth and comfort before that glowing fire after the exhilarating drive, as, throwing back my wraps, I leaned back and listened to

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Brian's accounts of Christmas in his boyhood, and of the sister of whom I had heard him speak but seldom. "Whom I missed always," he said, "until I found you.

"Now I do want to have a little surprise for our people, and am ready for any suggestions of your fertile imagination. I have already unpacked and made some preparation, under lock and key, else it would not be a surprise. Come and see," and, unlocking the door, we went into the drawing-room, where he showed how he had fastened securely in a box a small holly bush, aglow with red berries. "The thought occurred to me while I was in the city," he said, "and I got a lot of these," showing some bright-colored tapers, boxes of candy, and sheets of gilt and colored papers.

"The very thing," I exclaimed, fingering the papers. "I can make you roses and stars. I can cut the Betsy Ross star as she did for the flag, with a single clip of the scissors."

"That will be fine," he answered.

"Now look at these," and, pleased as two children, we went over the purchases, anticipating the pleasure they would give to the recipients. There had been a distribution that morning, he told me, of heavy clothing and shoes received from his com-

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mission merchant in Baltimore. But here were warm gloves and caps, gay bandannas and scarfs, and "b'iled shirts," high white collars, and brass earrings, dear to every darkey's heart.

"Now here is something I want you to wear to-day," Brian said, when we went back to our seats before the fire, and, opening a box, he displayed a wide embroidered collar, which, by suggestion, at once drew my eyes to the portrait above us.

"Yes," he said, noting my glance, "it is just that. I have always fancied I saw a likeness. In fact, you are more like my mother than my sister Geraldine. Not only that, but there is a something in your personality that so affects me, that did I accept the doctrine of transmigration, I would be tempted to believe that I had found that which I had loved best in the past, rejuvenated and reincarnated in you. Will you gratify a fancy I have to see if costume will not accentuate this likeness? I think we might find a dress in the trunks upstairs. Come, let us look," and he led the way up to the attic rooms. There, after going through several trunks, we found in an old chest of drawers a dress of pale green silk, with surpliced

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neck, which seemed as if made to wear with just such a collar.

I took it to my room, and, before donning it, I first combed and looped my hair, parting it on the left side in the fashion of the portrait; a fashion, by the way, which, as pleasing to him, I have continued ever since. Arranging the collar with a rose-colored ribbon, I rejoined Brian, who was impatiently pacing the hall. He paused, eying me with a look of critical satisfaction as I came slowly down the stair.

"There," he queried, placing a small mirror in my hand, as he led me to the portrait, "do you not yourself see a resemblance?" and I smilingly assented.

"Yes, you are wife, sister, and mother all in one to me," he said, "and, strangely enough, I feel at times like a father to you."

"I always have looked older than my years," I replied; "I sometimes think because 'I failed to learn love's holy earnest in a pretty play, I thus got overearly solemnized.'"

"While I," he answered, "who have lived so long in vain, and now find in you the ideal I sought, will follow that clue back through the maze to retrieve the years I have lost. I have feared at

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times that, because I was so much older, I wronged you in seeking your love, but we meet in reality on an equal plane, and our love is the love of a mature life forever renewing itself. Like those whom the gods love, we will die young because we shall never grow old.

"If anything could bring you closer to me this does," again recurring to the portrait and moving backward unconsciously.

"Evidently," I replied, in an amused tone, indicating the distance to which he had retreated, which had not been equalled at any time during the day, when we were together.

"You naughty child," he said, catching me in his arms. "Don't you see I am considering your pose? For I must have your miniature painted in just this costume, and precious it will be to me. At once the fulfilment of my dream and the reminder of this, our merry Christmas."

"And am I not to have a picture of you?" I asked.

"Yes, — you shall have this," and opening a drawer, he brought me a photograph, somewhat faded, of a young man in his early twenties. "Taken in fancy costume after a masquerade ball," he explained. I looked at it intently, and after

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some time comparing it with him, "It is you!" I cried, "when the shadows are brushed away."

"You have hit it exactly," he said, "and this hand," kissing the one that wore his ring, "will do the brushing. But a truce to philosophy on Christmas Day. Hero has already bidden us twice to dinner, and Uncle Cotton will be put out if his soup grows cold in waiting." Truly it was well worth taking while hot, for never did soup taste so good; and such oysters! "Only to be gotten in Chesapeake waters, and only to be cooked by a Maryland darkey," laughed Brian.

Indeed I could have applied the latter part of his remark to all the succeeding courses. That everything should have been raised on the place, and prepared by these trained servants, with but little, if any, supervision, was truly wonderful.

The fine old ham, — boiled in sherry, — the roast turkey, with oyster stuffing and celery sauce, and the well-cooked vegetables, were all delicious. A blazing plum-pudding with wine sauce was followed by apples and nuts, and our glasses were refilled at each course with rare old Madeira. Uncle Silence and Hero, moving noiselessly, were apparently as fond of the serving as was Uncle Cotton

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of the cooking of this Christmas dinner, which was to them the event of the year.

The table damask was spotless and exquisitely laundered; the silver, with much polishing, shone as did the mahogany when the cloth was removed for the nuts and wine. Indeed it was all almost like a feast in some Aladdin palace; and yet what must not have been the knowledge and forethought, the firmness and patience and kindness in training, that had brought about such results. For it was not a compulsory, but a loyal servitude that was evidenced in all these details. It was with very mingled emotions that I presided at that table, which, together with my dress associated with Brian's words, somehow gave me a sense of a dual personality; and I felt within me that gentle presence, into the fruits of whose labors we, her children, had entered, and were so thoroughly enjoying.

Lost in this meditation, I did not notice that our conversation had lapsed, until, my eyes meeting Brian's, I recognized that we were one in thought. Smiling, we rose simultaneously, and as we passed to our trysting-place in the bay-window, he whispered, lovingly: "I would say, if this be dreaming, let me dream alway, did I not realize how priceless is this waking realization of soul answering soul.

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Oh, Constance, I feel that at last I have passed through the desert sands of loneliness to reach the gushing springs of an oasis of sympathy. Each moment with you loosens the chain of a whole year's servitude to pain, and it is thus I travel back to youth and you, my beloved."

"Until you become like that picture?" I queried.

"Yes and no," he answered. "For I feel I need both the freshness of youth and the ripeness of age to fit me to be the guardian of such a treasure."

"Truly," I said, "there is much that won upon me in the early days of our acquaintance that I would not have you lose nor exchange for much that is youthful." And I thought of the absolute purity and high tone of character, and of the mingled dignity and courtesy of manner that had through all these months of our peculiar relationship assured to me a protection, at once fatherly and brotherly.

CHAPTER XVII

“**S**HALL we begin our work?” he said, presently, unlocking the drawing-room door and stirring and replenishing the fire; and soon I was busy making stars and roses, while he tied boxes and wired tapers on the tree. We covered the box in which it was fastened with a rug; on this I heaped some of the heavier gloves and scarfs, hanging the bright handkerchiefs and ties on the branches, where berries, roses, and stars made a bright setting. A large silver Christmas star was placed on the topmost twig, with a circle of tapers below to make it glisten.

How every detail of that one glorious merry Christmas fastens itself in memory, and I can see that tree as perfectly now as then.

The early winter twilight had already closed in before all was completed; and we were at last able to draw up our chairs and enjoy the restful fire-light after our busy afternoon.

Quickly the hours sped, and all too soon, it seemed, Hero called us to tea.

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How well do I recall the cheerful aspect of that tea-table — the soft glow of the lamps, the rich mahogany, reflecting the beautiful old silver, dainty glass, and china — and the all-pervading atmosphere of a refined home; and in Brian's face such an expression of peace and quiet satisfaction, that I thought, already the shadows are passing.

"By the way," he said, "we must have some egg-nog. It would never do to let Christmas pass without making egg-nog. Uncle Silence, when you bring that loaf of fruit-cake, leave some eggs and cream on the table, and after you clear off, I will show Miss Mabie what we do at Christmas times in Maryland."

Such fun it was! He soon found I could break and separate eggs better than he could. Then I watched him beat and stir in the brandy and cream, while I beat the whites to a froth. When it was finished he bore the quaint old Canton bowl to a table in the holly-decked archway of the hall, while I followed with the glasses, and cut the rich black cake.

"There's an old-time Maryland Christmas set-out," Brian said. "But, hark, what is that? Christmas Waits! Listen!" and nearer and nearer

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came the sound of voices, chanting in the rhythmic melody peculiar to Southern negroes:

“ Let us wauk in de light,
Wauk in de light,
Wauk in de light,
In de light of Gawd.”

A pause, and some merry chuckling, and then I recognized Hero's voice among the others singing out:

“ At Crismus play an' hab good cheah,
Fo' Crismus cum but onst a yeah.

“ Possum fat to feed ma deah,
Fo' Crismus cum but onst a yeah.

“ Tatah's hot an' cidah cleah,
Fo' Crismus cum but onst a yeah.

“ Rabbit stew an' simmon be'ah,
Fo' Crismus cum but onst a yeah.”

“ Come in,” called Brian, in response to a ponderous knock; the door swung open, admitting a band of mummers, and I found I was only one of a party of masqueraders. Such costumes! and how did they manage to get them up? There was an old woman with cap and spectacles; a girl with a hat and curls of long wood shavings pinned on under it; a solemn-looking preacher, buttoned up in a long

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coat, with broad white collar and high silk hat, was arm in arm with an Indian; a grotesque-looking animal, with a dog's head and face, had a body formed of a buffalo-robe—and the rest were equally curious. Brown paper, chicken feathers, charcoal, and hearth-paint had evidently been largely used in the manufacture of the false faces.

With suppressed chuckles, the band marched round, saluting us in dumb show, as they passed; then the preacher suddenly produced a banjo and the Indian began to pat juba, while the others broke into a hilarious "hoe-down," in which the flings of the "women folks" won such applause as:

"Go it, mammy—git along wid yuh, Sally—fring 'em roun', gals!"

"Just keep it up until we come back," called Brian, as the dance waxed fast and furious, and, signalling to me, we slipped into the drawing-room, and quickly lighted the tapers on the tree.

"Now bring your fiddles, boys, and come and dance here."

Instantly there was a tuning of fiddle-strings, and to a merry tune, the playing and singing interrupted with many a delighted ejaculation, they pranced around the tree.

"Now a waltz, Bedfoot," and the time changed,

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and, as the dancers fell back, Brian caught me up, and we swung to the rhythmic measure round the tree, out the door, up and down the hall and drawing-room, until, flushed, panting, and exhausted, I sank, protesting, on a davenport.

"Now let's see who Kriss Kringle has remembered! I'll read the names, and you hand around," softly and tenderly, "Constance."

The expressions of gratitude and delight as they gathered around me were really pathetic.

They are a grateful, simple-hearted race! "Dat sho'ly am nice! My! Jack Frost won't git me wid dat on, fo' sartin." "Sally," who held up his skirts for his "gif'," came near repeating the somersault of the morning when I dropped in it not only another box of candy, but a brand-new pocket-knife.

"Now Miss Mabie will give you some more 'Chrismus,'" said their master, and they followed me out in the hall, and gathered around the punch-bowl, where each received a generous glass of egg-nog and a big piece of cake.

"Tank yuh, Mars' Brian! Tank yuh, missy."

"You suttinly is good. My! But yuh does look like de ole mistis, sho' 'nuff, in dat dar frock. Mars' Brian, dis is jes' lak de ole-time Crismus, and missy sho'ly is de ole mistis come back agin."

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“Do you think so, boys? Well, you must have another glassful to drink her health round the tree, after you sing your Christmas song once more.”

So again they circled round with: “Crismus cum but onst a yeah.” Then just as they raised their glasses, Brian said:

“Yes, boys, you’re right! The ‘mistis’ has come to us again,” taking my hand. “That is what ‘young missy’ has promised me she will be. So we will drink the health of ‘young mistis.’”

“Mistis and marster! Bress de Lawd! De King and de Queen ob Thomon’,” was the voiced response in tones of delight as the glasses were emptied.

“Boys,” said their master, “I can’t tell you how glad I was you sang, ‘Let Us Walk in the Light of God.’ Because, you know, your old mistress loved to hear you sing it. You know she used to talk to us about the Christmas star that was the light that came from God at Christmas-time, and that’s why we have the stars on the Christmas tree. Now, before we say good night, I think we will remember the dear old mistress by saying the prayers she loved to say with you,” and the grave, solemn tones followed his through the “Our Father” and the old Christmas prayer:

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“O God, who, by the leading of a star didst manifest thy only-begotten Son; . . . Mercifully grant that we, . . . may after this life have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”

“Good night, Mars’ Brian, — good night, young mistis’. De Lawd bress yuh bof’. My, we’s glad yuh gwine to stay!” And, with a ducking of heads and scraping of feet in true darkey fashion, they passed out, and again the voices came back to us, this time in the refrain of the Christmas hymn — “While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks.”

Standing close to the window, we looked out upon the stars, and listened until we could just catch the closing words:

“Peace on earth, good-will to men,
Begin and never cease.”

“There could not have been a sweeter ending to our happy day — nor a brighter omen for our new life, dear heart,” he said, with his lips upon my forehead. “And now you must sleep to-night. Will you promise me, my dear one? Remember, it is not only your lover who pleads, but your physician who commands.”

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"No fear of my disobeying," I answered, as, slipping from his embrace, I sped lightly up the stairs.

"Happy hearts know only dreamless slumber, so I can promise not even to dream of you until to-morrow. And so good night."

There was once a woman who went out to look for happiness. She searched vainly for many years and thought she had at last found it, but it withered away like the ephemeral rose-wreaths of Astarte, and left only ashes in her hand — the ashes of a dead love. But in the last flicker of the fire of love came compensation in the shape of a little baby girl, and to her was transmitted the legacy of sorrow. But she also found after many years — happiness, and it, too, withered away as the flowers before the raging prairie-fires, and she but put her lips to the cup of joy, when it was dashed from her. What is happiness? It is divine — it is Satanic! Sometimes it is eternal — sometimes ephemeral.

I once thought it was mine own, but — but — happiness smiled at me with a beautiful face, on which the noonday sun shone full and bright; but when the afternoon came on and the shadows grew apace, why, happiness was ugly; it was sadness, not

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happiness, that confronted me; sadness with the wrinkled visage of age, not the smooth skin of youth — and I wonder — I wonder — how I wonder — now what do I wonder? I forget! My head and heart are tired, and I must rest awhile. Amen!

I have given the above just as it left Mrs. O'Brien's hands, and from it the reader can easily comprehend the disordered condition of her poor diseased brain. — M. W. Barr.

CHAPTER XVIII

SEATED next day with my hand in Brian's, I recalled that light-hearted "until to-morrow." It was well I had not realized that to-morrow was to bring the certainty of our speedy parting, else that dreamless, refreshing slumber would not have been mine.

"I knew it," Brian said, "and it was to that end I devised and planned all, that your Christmas joy should be unmarred by a single throb of pain. It was a perfect day, was it not? And from my heart of hearts, I can reëcho that 'Bress de Lawd.' Now let us be brave and make the most of the days that are left to us, and the week shall be as one long Christmas day, in our memory forever."

And indeed it is with me now; as long as I dwell only upon that happy, happy time, I seem to be in a dream in which I live again each blissful moment with him. It is the sudden awakening to the sense of the nevermore, that makes my poor brain dazed until I grow unconscious for weeks, of everything around me. Oh, those walks and rides and talks,

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in which each word revealed a sense of oneness and confidence and affection, such as only the first man and the first woman must have known in the primal Eden!

“How can I leave thee, Paradise!” It was well that we had many matters of business to occupy us. Brian took me all over the farm, that was to be left in my charge, with Uncle Columbus for my overseer, and we went into every minutia of arrangement, he even writing the letters for me to send, that were to put me in communication with his lawyer, his commission merchants in Baltimore, and the firms with whom he had business dealings.

To guard against even a possibility of loss to myself, and to secure to me the legal reversion of his estate, in the event of any mishap to him, he told me he was sure a marriage ceremony would be necessary, and this, and the signing of his will, would be his last acts before leaving Thomond. This involved a trip to Chestertown for conference with both clergyman and lawyer, and as every moment was precious to us both, he thought, if the weather moderated sufficiently, I might go with him.

By one of those sudden changes peculiar to that tidewater district, the following Monday—

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the thirtieth — proved all that could be desired; clear and mild, the air almost balmy, so that Brian decided that, with wraps and robe, there could be no risk for me in the sail for which I longed, and which I thoroughly enjoyed. My cap and cloak again proved all-sufficient, although Brian, with tender solicitude, would make me slip down under the buffalo-robe, if the breeze freshened in the least while we were tacking up the river.

Ah! that sail is one of my sweetest memories! There was all the charm of our boating-trips of the summer and fall, brightened and intensified by our closer relation — the crown of joy! And when I tried in vain to express it, "My darling," he said, "it is our 'Indian Summer.'"

His care of me was evidenced in such thoughtful detail, that he again went over the list he had made out with me for some shopping we were to do, both for the house and my own personal needs. Leaving the boat in the care of Uncle Shadow, we called first at the lawyer's office, where Brian made an appointment to see him within an hour, and then at the rectory.

I rather dreaded the visit to the clergyman, and it was with a sense of relief that I learned there had recently been a change, and I was not

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to meet my former visitor. The new rector was a kindly old man, who evinced the greatest sympathy and interest when Brian introduced me as his ward, who had consented to become his wife, and explained that, as he had been ordered by his physician to a sanitarium, circumstances obliged us to hasten our marriage, which we both particularly desired should take place at Thomond on the day of his departure.

Brian was therefore forced to request him to come to us on New Year's Day. A boat would be in readiness at noon — so as not to conflict with his other engagements — to carry both him and the lawyer to Thomond, and after the ceremony he could return to Chestertown on the steamer from Baltimore.

Leaving me at the stores, where he started me on my shopping-list, Brian, occupied with his lawyer for over an hour, rejoined me in time for our homeward sail in the full glow of the afternoon sun.

His conference had been more than satisfactory, for not only could the lawyer — Mr. Wallace — come, but, as he was going to Baltimore on that day, he would accompany him to Barnum's Hotel, where he was to meet his physician. This was an

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immeasurable relief to me, for I had dreaded the effect of his going away alone.

Brian produced and showed me the marriage license with great glee, saying: "Now with this legal document the deed is half-done." We had a merry picnic, Brian wrapping me up in the robe, and feeding me on cake and candy, fruit and nuts. It had grown quite cold, however, before we landed, and we were glad to exchange the sunset for the glow of the lamp, the hissing urn, blazing fire, and cheerful atmosphere that made the supper that awaited us doubly inviting.

Yet again I say the memory of that day will abide with me forever!

I awoke the next morning with the very natural thought:

"To-morrow is my wedding-day — and what shall I wear?" A problem, however, which later was quickly solved.

"'Oh, dear, what can the matter be?'" said Brian, coming into the library to find me in a brown study. "Shall I guess? It is the momentous question of a woman's life! What shall be my wedding-dress? I knew it," he laughed, taking my face between his hands, "but I have already settled that to my satisfaction."

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"Which?" I questioned. "My white dress, or would you prefer the one I wore last evening?"

"No — though I would like you to wear that again this evening. But for the ceremony, we might find another. Can't you think?"

"In that chest, you mean? Well, it must be like the mother's bag in 'Swiss Family Robinson.' It meets every occasion."

"We know it holds a wedding-dress. Only this time we will have it entire, and the Queen of Thomond will wear her veil as well as her jewels."

"Oh, I remember; the dress I wore at the ball!"

"Yes; we will get it at once so that it will be in readiness."

With what mingled emotions did I again shake out the satin folds, and arrange the filmy lace, wondering if the bride of that far-away yesterday could have been any happier than would be the bride of to-morrow.

As the twilight gathered, I again put on the green dress and embroidered collar, as Brian had requested, and joined him at supper. The sense of its being our last together was ever present, and although we tried to chat, it was a failure, and we had but little appetite, and even the terrapin and oysters — the foretaste of the wedding-feast — that

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Uncle Cotton had provided, could not tempt us. Soon we found ourselves arm in arm, pacing hall and drawing-room, or seated, gazing into the fire, content only in the consciousness of being together.

At last I drew him to the piano, where it seemed to me he poured out his very soul in music, and when he struck a few chords of "Indian Summer" and then sang "My Queen," my whole frame shook with uncontrollable sobs.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Tears on the eve of your bridal? This will never do."

"Oh," I sobbed, with my head on his shoulder, "this parting is so bitter. I cannot let you go — I cannot live without you."

"Hush, dear one," he whispered, soothingly. "You must not think of that to-night; the time will soon pass, and remember that even though absent, always I am watching and caring for you, until the day of glad reunion."

"Now it grows late, and I am going to send you to your room, while I stay here and lull you to sleep with music."

"Good night, my own!" and with one long kiss I left him, and the last thing I heard were the tender chords, giving the sweet assurance of a love that never slumbers.

CHAPTER XIX

I CAN see him now with the glad love-light in his beautiful eyes on that New Year's Day — our wedding-day — as I came in my bridal-dress to meet him in the upper hall — my king, my Brian Boru.

I thrill again to the exquisite tenderness of glance and tone as, first on bended knee, he kissed my hand, and then clasped me in his arms with: "I come to claim my queen!"

As slowly we descended the stair together, I noticed that the servants were gathered in an eager group, respectful and attentive, at the end of the hall. The lawyer — who was to fill the part of guardian in the ceremony and give me away — and the clergyman, in his white robes, awaited us under the green arch, just within which we paused, almost beneath the portrait, whose presence seemed at once a welcome and a benediction.

Hardly were the words spoken that bound us together, when Brian said: "Constance — darling,

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come with us now," and he wrapped me in my crimson cloak, while Hero slipped on my sandals.

He had told me of his intention early in the day, and we had agreed that the first act of our wedded life should be one of charity and forgiveness towards all that remained of one who had, in the past, so wrecked his own.

And now, silently, our little party — the clergyman, the lawyer, my husband, and I, followed by the servants — crossed the garden to the graveyard. There, over the new-made grave, the beautiful service of the Church was solemnly read. Commending her soul to the care of God and His holy angels, — while the gates of the sky stood ajar to permit the last gleams of the golden sunset to shine on the spot where her poor body was to rest until the last great day, — we turned to retrace our steps.

Thus, hand in hand, side by side, in this world, do joy and sorrow move.

Returning to the house, the lawyer summoned us to the library, where papers were signed, and various formalities were complied with before we went in to dinner — and then — and then — and then — came the end of my brief happiness.

Brian held me close, so close, while he covered my face — hair — hands with kisses. An eternity

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of bliss and pain was compressed into those few moments. My arms were around his neck; his lips held mine as if it were impossible to separate — and then — he — my husband — my Brian Boru — was gone, and I was left to live without him as best I could.

Dear Doctor Barr, I am nearing the end of my story, and likewise my life, for I feel that when it is done, so will my life be finished, too. It is the story of a woman with one great love. With most people, affection is disseminated through family and friends, but mine has been centered on the one man who waits for me beyond the radiant gates of Paradise.

The winter days were long, so long! Whenever the weather permitted, I would ride over the farm, or along the beach on Comet or Gloriana, with Hero, and dear old Surajah running along beside me. Indeed they were my constant companions — Hero sleeping on a cot outside my door, with the faithful dog on a rug at his feet. So that with Uncle Silence within call, in a room off the kitchen, I was really well protected, but oh, so lonely! I tried in vain to take up some study, but I could not

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concentrate my thoughts. I would sit for hours in the library, in the spot where Brian first told me of his love, building air-castles, in which he and I were to dwell in the sweet by and by; and each night I ticked off on my calendar one of the seven hundred and thirty days that must pass before he was to come again.

In midwinter I had a visitor — a young girl artist, who came, commissioned by my husband, to paint the miniature that he so coveted; the one that I afterwards took from over his dead heart; the one I have given you.

So, in a state of waiting, my life became that of the tranquil lotus-eaters, its only excitement the coming of his letters upon whose tender words I lived for years. Yes, even long after they had ceased to come — alas, until, with much handling and fondling, they, too, were lost to me.

Ah! how could I do aught but love him? Love him, until love itself in its very intensity became pain!

And yet was I not richer? What do I say — am I not richer? More to be envied in such a pos-

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session — the absorbing possession of a noble life — than many a woman who lives out her life beside a man in whose affections she has no place?

Yes, a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier days, but again — surely — the crowning of joy and of love is the assurance that you are the impersonation of an ideal!

As the winter drifted into spring, I lived much out-of-doors, interested in everything about the farm that would make my letters speak to my husband of home. I wrote him of the seeds sown, of the flowers planted, and of my adoption of another little lamb — another Innocence — in place of the one grown up.

And all this time I never left Thomond. I lived alone, but no island princess was ever more loyally guarded and attended than was I by my faithful negro servants. Not once did they waver in fidelity and devotion, nor had they one thought other than welcoming back the master they loved, and delivering to him the young mistress they had come to adore. Indeed I believe to these humble, faithful servitors I filled the place of child and mistress and queen.

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Living apart as we did, we little heeded the outer world, and all with which the papers had been teeming since the election of President Lincoln.

The first shot was fired at Fort Sumter, the secession of States followed in quick succession, Maryland wavered in the balance, and while many of her bravest sons cast their lot with the Confederacy, the first blood of the Civil War was shed in the streets of Baltimore, on the anniversary of the battles of Lexington and Concord. The war spirit was abroad, and swept over the country. My husband caught its echoes even in the seclusion of the sanitarium, and in an access of impulsive enthusiasm, determined to join the Southern army.

I was to have met him in Baltimore for a brief farewell, but, on the eve of taking the steamer, received a hurried line from him, telling me that, in order to elude the Federal authorities, he had joined a party going by another route across the Potomac.

Joining Stuart's command, he was, in one of his daring rides up the valley, made prisoner, and brought to Fort McHenry. Again I was about to make an effort to see him, when early one evening a messenger — a soldier in Federal uniform — brought me a sealed letter from the officer in

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charge of a camp near Queenstown. My husband, escaping from Fort McHenry, and trying to make his way home, had been recaptured by a pursuing party, was severely wounded, and in all probability would not live until the morning.

It was the first of November — the day of All Saints! Alas, the anniversary of the day of the tournament — the day he had crowned me Queen of Love and Beauty — Queen of his Heart. Through what depths and heights had I not passed in one short year, and now could it be possible I was to go over the same pathway to receive the last sigh of that heart, so devoted to me? Something in my brain seemed to give way at the thought, and, as I stood in the arched way reading the summons, there seemed a call to me to put on the wedding-dress in which I had there plighted my faith to him — the dress I had first worn that very night one year ago.

The night was chill, but my crimson cloak would shelter me even as the love that had provided it, and the men should go — as many as possible — and Hero, and Gloriana, and Surajah, and even Innocence — the lamb — that was the very picture of the one he had first given me. All who loved him should go at his call — in the barge. Soon

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we reached the shore and the camp — to find — to find — that Thomond was indeed the Garden of Irem, and the Death-angel had struck it with his lightning-wand — and — and — and — I can write no more, Doctor Barr. My husband died that night in my arms, and I have never ceased to grieve for him. But he will soon be my own once more, for God is good.

AFTERWORD

THUS abruptly ended Mrs. O'Brien's story. I have sometimes thought, was it not best so — that joy, gladness, love, and happiness supreme be condensed in one brief period — then oblivion — death? For I have seen so much in a life prolonged, far sadder than death.

My interest in Mrs. O'Brien's life history was so intense, that I was glad when, some years later, chance revealed to me the name of the officer in command of the camp at that time.

I wrote to him, giving him the main points of the narrative, and requesting of him any information he felt disposed to give, relating to the capture and death of Doctor O'Brien.

His prompt reply proves an interesting sequel to Mrs. O'Brien's narration:

“NEW YORK CITY, June 18, 18—.

“No. 4 East — St.

“MY DEAR DOCTOR BARR:— Your letter comes to me like a voice from the past, and I am only too

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happy to answer your courteous inquiries. I remember the circumstances perfectly; I have good cause to.

“ Doctor O’Brien, a prisoner at Fort McHenry, had managed to escape, and as it was supposed he would naturally seek his home and his wife on his way South, before recrossing the Potomac, we were notified to be on the lookout for him. Results proved the soundness of the conjecture, and he was recaptured and unfortunately wounded by our scouting party, at the moment of embarking for his island home.

“ Being a physician, and recognizing the serious nature of his wound, he begged that his wife might be notified. Impressed as I was by his courage and general bearing, — he was every inch a gentleman, — I was quite ready to respond to his request, and the messenger was immediately despatched. Meanwhile, in the interval of waiting, he told me the history of his life, and of the wife, for whom he left with me loving messages, fearing that the end might come before she could arrive. We gave him stimulants, and made him as comfortable as possible. About nine o’clock a red light in the distance notified us of the approach of a boat, which proved to be a large barge, rowed by eight negro men. As

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it drew nearer, we could distinguish the form of a young woman standing in the prow, leaning with her right arm on the neck of a white ass, while her left hand rested on the head of a large mastiff. Her figure, slight in appearance as a child; her face, of a marvellously beautiful type, had all the maturity of womanhood. Her dress was that of a bride, a white satin, richly embroidered. Over her shoulders was a crimson cloak, bordered with ermine. Her dark hair, parted low on the left side, had no covering beyond a white veil and a wreath of orange blossoms. Her eyes, pathetic with intense sadness, looked straight ahead of her, nor did she seem to notice anything as she landed and mounted.

“I thought at once of Una on her white ass, with her lion and lamb, for it was as if she had just stepped from the ‘Faërie Queene.’

“Surely it was a unique cavalcade that approached our camp in the light of the full autumn moon. The white ass, with its scarlet trappings, led by a little negro lad, and bearing this beautiful woman in her flowers and ermine — at once a bride and a queen. She led by a blue ribbon a white lamb, while on the other side stalked the magnificent lion-mastiff, and behind walked gravely and solemnly her body-guard of negro men.

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“Instinctively my men stood attention, and every head was uncovered as the little procession passed on through the camp to the tent, where the dying one lay watching. He must have noted every detail, for I heard him murmur: ‘My bride — my Una with her lion and her lamb — my good true men!’ Soon, hastily dismounting, she had pillowed his poor head on her breast.

“‘My husband — my Brian Boru!’

“‘My wife — my Constance! Now death come quickly, since I have seen you once again.’

“‘No, dearest! See how many are here to love you!’ And the faithful servants crowded around him with the affectionate, endearing expressions peculiar to the race.

“Wrapped in their blankets they sat all night outside the tent, a watch for any service they could render. The big mastiff came close — Surajah, I think they called him — and whined and licked his face, as his master patted his head; and the ass and the lamb came, too. He had a word for each and all. But it was an effort, evidently, for he was sinking. Soon he rested quietly in her arms, which enfolded him, and so they passed the night.

“Closer and closer together came the two black

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heads; closer and closer came death; came and took his stand beside him.

“ ‘My love; my Una — my Constance — farewell.’ She held him close, her lips pressed to his brow, and as the dawn came in, his soul went out to meet it.

“ Tenderly she laid him down, and turned to me as she rose, her dress stained with his life-blood, her veil washed out by the night, and putting back the masses of damp hair from her brow with a weary gesture. Youth seemed to have faded during the night, and her face was changed as one from which life had fled; the beauty remained, but it was lifeless, as if carved in marble. Her voice also was expressionless, although the tones were low and musical, as she said, as if in her sleep: ‘I think we will go now — if you please — back to Thomond. Have I your permission? He is no longer a prisoner of war. He is free. The good King of Thomond.’

“ We made a rough litter, and over him she threw the cloak of crimson and ermine, and he in truth looked like a king asleep, as the strange procession retraced its steps to the boat in the hush of the November dawn. Reverently my men — his captors — laid him in the boat, and she took

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his head in her lap. 'Hark you, gentlemen!' she said. 'I ask your pardon for any trouble we have given you, and I pray you accept my forgiveness for the sorrow you have, I am sure, unwillingly brought to me. You did but your duty. And now push off! Boys, back to Thomond.' Involuntarily my soldiers knelt with hats doffed, and, as the light broadened, they rowed away in the flush of the rising sun, and were lost to our sight over the blue waters of the Chesapeake.

"To paraphrase a famous poet:

" 'She stood beside me, the embodied vision of the brightest dream, that, like a dawn, heralds the day of life; the shadow of her presence would have made for me a paradise; all familiar things she touched; all common words she spoke, became to me like forms and sounds of a diviner world. She was as the sun, as lovely. She came and went, and left me what I am.'

"I am a grizzled old bachelor, who knows more of war and camps than of tea-cups and drawing-rooms. I have never married, because I have met no woman who awoke in me the same emotions. When the war was over, I went back to Maryland. Thomond was in the hands of strangers. The slaves, of course, had been freed, and were scattered,

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and I could only learn that, through reverses incident to the war, Mrs. O'Brien, left penniless, had gone away, no one knew where, and all my subsequent efforts to trace her were unavailing, until your letter solved the mystery.

"The indebtedness, therefore, is entirely with,

"Yours very cordially and gratefully,

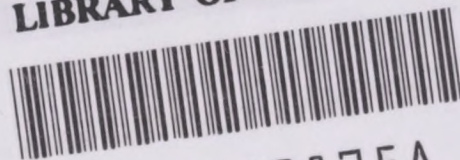
"P. B. A."

THE END.

Will

Walker

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